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# CHOPIN: HIS LIFE

By  
WILLIAM MURDOCH

NEW YORK  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1935

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**TO**  
**ALFRED CORTOT**  
**WHOSE ART IS PROOF OF THE**  
**DEEPEST SINCERITY AND THE**  
**HIGHEST IDEALS**



## P R E F A C E

SINCE the publication in 1888 of Frederick Niecks's excellent *Life of Chopin*, which has been the standard biography in English ever since and is the basis for most foreign biographies, much new material about the composer has come to light. The collection of Chopin's letters gathered together by Dr. Henry Opienski, and the more recent *Collection Polonaise* edition of *Lettres de Chopin* (Paris 1933), which Dr. Opienski has made even more complete, have provided many new psychological sidelights on the character and the mind of this pathetic Polish genius. New facts have also been discovered concerning his father, Nicolas Chopin, and—more important still—it has been proved that Chopin was entirely of French descent on his father's side.

It is only natural that I should love the composer Chopin—can there be a pianist who can sincerely say he does not?—but I have always been attracted also by the loneliness and unhappiness of his life. That a man of genius, his thoughts mainly occupied with either a fresh inspiration or the working-out of an older one, should prefer solitude is by no means enigmatical. That he should wish to be unhappy and should, revel perversely in his misery is another matter, and it is the fathoming of this strange characteristic which for so long has fascinated me. With the opportunity of using the letters as a background and the additional interest of the newly-discovered genealogical facts, I feel that a new life in English of the greatest composer for the pianoforte and one of the most melodically inspired of all the great musicians will not be superfluous.

In a later volume I hope to deal more fully with Chopin as composer, pianist and teacher, and to include a comprehensive study of his works.

A considerable amount of space has been given to George Sand; for the extraordinary part she played in Chopin's life cannot be glossed over. Their liaison was by no means idyllic. She was both the worst and the best influence in his existence, for without her interest and encouragement

and the cultural effect of her circle of celebrated friends he would never have developed to such a high artistic plane ; yet there can be no doubt that her treatment hastened his end. After their separation he composed nothing of any importance. Life was empty : he even looked forward to his approaching death.

There have been many biographies, studies and pamphlets written about Chopin, a chosen list of which is included in the bibliography at the end of this book. I should like particularly to acknowledge my indebtedness to the two-volume biography of Professor Niecks, and to the Opienski collections of Chopin's letters. No modern biographer of Chopin could proceed successfully without reference to the valuable information these works contain. Since the publication of the letters in a more complete form a new vista has been opened up to us and many complexities have been unravelled. Chopin was not a distinguished letter-writer, but, at times, especially when writing to his family or to the more intimate of his Polish friends, he was extremely fluent and could be most entertaining and amusing. The art of spelling was never an accomplishment with him, nor was his grammar, even in his native tongue, secure. But the letters are human and very self-expressive. I have quoted Mrs. Voynich's translation throughout, except in those letters which do not appear in the English edition and which I have translated from the French ; and I have allowed the irregularities to remain. These quotations are reprinted from *Chopin's Letters* by Henryk Opienski by permission of and special arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., authorised publishers in America, and I am deeply conscious also of my debt to Messrs. Desmond Harmsworth Ltd., publishers of the London edition, for their generous permission. I must also thank the Librairie Plon (Paris) for allowing me to quote from Karénine's '*George Sand, sa vie et ses œuvres*'.

To M. Alfred Cortot I am especially indebted for his invaluable advice and assistance on several questionable points and for placing at my disposal photographs and letters from his collection. M. Skirmunt, the Polish Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, has shown me many courtesies, for

which I am most grateful. Miss Pughe-Jones of the London house of Messrs. Pleyel & Co. is another to whom I owe much gratitude ; and lastly I must recognize the great help given to me by my wife in the translations and in the unenviable tasks of indexing and proof-correcting, work which she managed to appear to enjoy, but for which I thank her nevertheless.

Don Bartomeu Ferrà, who now lives in the cell occupied by Chopin in the Chartreuse of Valldemosa, and who has there a most interesting museum of Chopin and George Sand relics, very kindly provided the photographs of the monastery. My friend Mr. R. J. Forbes, Principal of the Royal Manchester College of Music, has given me permission to reproduce the Death Mask of Chopin, the original of which belongs to the College. I wish also to express my appreciation to the Polish Embassy in London for allowing me to include an illustration of a recent head of Chopin by the Polish sculptor, Ostrowski, which has not, to my knowledge, been reproduced before.

WILLIAM MURDOCH

ST. JOHN'S WOOD, 1934



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\* From Binental's 'Chopin' [Warszawa : Nakład Drukarni Wł. Łazarskiego].

## CHAPTER I

### GENEALOGY OF CHOPIN

1738-1810

THE name of Chopin has been a household word for the last hundred years; it will continue to be so for the next hundred, and will remain unchallenged as long as the art of music lives. Chopin's genius was immediately recognized, and not only did he quickly achieve fame – an accomplishment unusual for a composer – but his fame has continued to increase. The beauty of his melodies, the richness of his harmonies, the depths of passion revealed, the elegance of line, the charm so simply expressed in the *fioriture*, the dignity and refinement so characteristic of the Polish race, the fervour and the undying patriotic faith that are the backbone of nearly every composition – all these produced on his amazed hearers an irresistible effect which they could not forget; nor are we, musicians and public alike, any less amazed a century later. Although some of his harmonies may have struck harshly on contemporary ears, the originality of his writing enabled the hitherto banal and ugly pianoforte to be raised to the level of a true musical instrument; for no-one had conceived such tone-colours before.

Some will say that Chopin's lasting fame can be attributed to his unhappy existence, to the illness that held him in bondage for most of his adult life and eventually killed him, to the torment he suffered for the Poland that he worshipped, and to the chagrin of an incomplete life – for he never achieved the domestic happiness that he yearned for. Though these causes give grounds for such assertions, and unquestionably have won the sympathy of the feminine world, only the qualities of the music itself could have placed him amongst the greatest composers. His music is more popular and more necessary now than ever it was.

Others who belittle Chopin's genius maintain that his sentimentality is more fitted for the sick-room, the school-room and the boudoir than for the concert-room and the study, that its

appeal is to the slighter and more mundane feelings rather than to the intellect and the grander emotions. But Chopin wrote little that can be labelled weakly sentimental, and very much that is heroic. These cavillers only think of the *Nocturnes* and of a few other *salon* pieces, remembering certain exaggerated performances; they fail to remember the ardour of the *Polonaises*, the *élan* of some of the *Mazurkas*, the poetry and passion combined in the *Preludes*, the exaltation of the *Ballades*, the fire of the *Scherzi*, the consummate genius of the *Études*, the patriotism of the *F minor Fantaisie*, the exquisiteness of the *Barcarolle*. If they would only devote a short time to examining some of these major works of Chopin they would discover the falsity of their accusation and perhaps gain a few moments of unexpected bliss. Even if this is denied them, they will be forced to admit the originality of his genius, for if they are sincere and their knowledge is secure they will see that his methods, whether technical or colourful, are entirely his own and entirely novel.

This is not the place intimately to discuss or diagnose the aspects of Chopin's art, for a second volume will be devoted to his work as composer, pianist and teacher; but in passing a word should be said about him as an innovator. Chopin may have been influenced by Hummel in his youth, by Field in his early manhood; but the moment he felt that his own legs were strong enough to support him, that his technical equipment could sustain his desire for self-expression, he pursued his own course, which was unlike that of anyone else, and created and fashioned a technique both of pianoforte-playing and of composition which has affected every subsequent composer and school. The influence of Bach, of Beethoven, or of Wagner has not been greater in the evolution of music, although Chopin wrote almost exclusively for the pianoforte. In many respects he can be called the founder of modern music. He may not have discovered chromatic harmony – J. S. Bach had written the *Chromatic Fantaisie* ninety years before Chopin was born – but no earlier composer had been bold enough to enrich his harmonic palette by such free use of chromatic colours. He himself began by being afraid of them, but his fear did not last long. Soon we find him moving these dangerous chords with the freedom of a Protestant contrapuntist, and setting the

fashion for their universal adoption. Did not Wagner admit the power of these progressions and continue developing them almost to their extremity? Liszt, who is generally credited with being the founder of the modern orchestra, of the tone-poem, of many developments in musical evolution, was astute enough to recognize the strokes of genius in the early works of this frail young Pole, and was able to turn them to his own advantage. It is not only in the pianoforte writings of Liszt that we find the influence of Chopin; it permeates almost all his works. On the other hand, try as we may, we shall discover no other style in Chopin's music but his own, melodically, harmonically, pianistically or colourfully. His greatness lies in his absolute individuality. I will even assert that Chopin was the most original of all the great composers.

Although he never had to wait long for an inspiration, he nearly always had to work exceptionally hard to bring it up to his fastidious standard of perfection. He would prune and chisel with the utmost laboriousness, with a patience like that of Leonardo da Vinci, before disposing of his manuscript; and often this would be altered and re-shaped, as was Balzac's wont, when the proofs arrived for correction. This accounts for the lack of uniformity in the various editions. All through his life Chopin was a most indeterminate creature, and nowhere was this trait more pointedly shown than in the revisions of his works. His was a curious nature – a mixture of a marked sense of inferiority in all matters concerning others, and a self-confidence that insisted on succeeding in the face of every difficulty. This will to succeed enabled him to develop in musical stature, and each fresh composition showed a continuity of growth. Notwithstanding his personal vanity he was extraordinarily timid and shy, diffident and taciturn to an exasperating degree; devoted to his family and to his few Polish friends, passionately adoring his country and everything pertaining to it. But this very adoration was so vehement that it prevented any close attachment to foreigners, and among his innumerable circle of acquaintances and admirers he made, apart from his countrymen, very few intimate friends. Whether his malady was the cause, or his frequent disappointments in his *affaires de cœur*, or his bitter fight to earn money (he cannot

have earned much more than 25,000 francs during his whole life), one cannot say; but he was a miserable man in more ways than one. He was too self-centred to interest himself in the affairs of others; nor did he shine in his dealings with his publishers and other men of business. He was not a stoic, for, though his sufferings were great, he was evidently a most distressing patient. But for his music he will be forgiven everything. He will always be counted amongst the greatest, because he was a poet, an artist, and a genius with the divine gift of inspired melody.

M. Edouard Ganche has at last elucidated the mystery of Chopin's ancestry. The numerous biographers had each given their versions and mentioned other problematical theories, until it was impossible, out of such a conglomeration, for any student to form more than a hazy idea of Chopin's origin. Now, thanks chiefly to M. Ganche's efforts, we are no longer in doubt.

Throughout his life Nicolas Chopin, the father of Frédéric, divulged nothing concerning his family or his youth. He admitted having been born near Nancy in Lorraine, France, and the date of his birth was believed to be August 17, 1770. With the knowledge that Lorraine had been annexed by France and that Louis XV had offered the dukedom of the new province to his father-in-law, the twice exiled King Stanislas Leszczyński of Poland, the general conviction of the various Chopin biographers was that Nicolas had Polish blood in his veins. They romantically pictured him as being the son of one of the courtiers in the Duke's entourage, and imagined that it was only natural for him to wish to visit the land of his people. But all these romances and fancies have been shattered by the discovery among some old documents in Russia of a dossier relating to the services of Nicolas Chopin to Poland, at that time under Russian rule. When Nicolas sought to retire from his professorship at the Military School in Warsaw, it was necessary for him to fill in certain facts as to the names of his father and mother, and the date and place of his birth. From this source the following information was obtained: his father was François Chopin, and his mother Marguerite, and he was born in the tiny village of Marainville (Vosges) on April 17, 1770.

Once his birthplace was known, it was comparatively easy to probe into his ancestry. The register of births and deaths is carefully kept in France, and genealogical facts are not difficult to trace. The certificates were found and examined, and agreed in every detail except one – the date of birth – with the Warsaw declaration. Nicolas was born on the 15th and baptized on the 16th April, 1771, his father François Chopin being described as a *charron* (wheelwright) and his mother as Marguerite Deflin. It was then discovered that Nicolas had two sisters, one older and one younger than himself. The elder, Anne, who had married Joseph Thomas, died on March 22, 1845, aged 75; the younger, Marguerite, widow of Nicolas Bastien, died twelve days earlier, aged 69. As Nicolas himself had only died the previous year at the age of 73, the family could be called healthy and long-lived. Further proof of stability can be found in the fact that Nicolas's father, François, born on November 11, 1738, remarried at the age of 62 after the death of Marguerite, and died on January 31, 1814, at the age of 75; his second wife, Marguerite Laprévote, was also 62 and was the widow of François Mortefer. After his second marriage François Chopin forsook his calling of wheelwright, and became a *vigneron* (vine-grower) like his father. Many years later, after his retirement, Frédéric's father in Warsaw fondly cultivated the vine, and wrote with enthusiasm to his son of his success in rearing fruit which the family enjoyed; his hereditary instincts were not obliterated.

According to M. Ganche, whose important article appeared in the review *La Pologne* on January 15, 1927, it has not been possible to trace farther back than Frédéric's great-grandfather, Nicolas Chopin, who married Elisabeth Bastien. But this is sufficiently far for France to be able to claim half the credit for the great musician. The family was absolutely French. What then was the reason that Nicolas, after migrating to Poland, never referred to his family, never communicated with them, and apparently never told Frédéric of their existence? Was he ashamed of his birth? He became a respected citizen of Warsaw, and rose from the position of a humble teacher of French to that of a professor of literature. Perhaps he was afraid of his Polish friends hearing of his peasant origin? Not once was

he known to have expressed a wish to revisit France, even to see his idolized son. It has been suggested that as he ran away to Poland about the beginning of the French Revolution, served in the Polish army, and later accepted posts under the Polish government, he might be considered a renegade in the country of his birth. It would be interesting to know whether Frédéric was ever aware that his father was a full-blooded Frenchman, or whether he suspected, when he was the idol of fashionable Paris, that he had two old aunts living in obscurity in Lorraine.

Nothing remains to us of the early life of Nicolas but the fact that at the age of about seventeen he left France for Poland. He had been offered the chance of a livelihood, for a French friend had promised him a book-keeping post in a tobacco factory at Warsaw. The taking of snuff had become fashionable, and the manufacture of tobacco was flourishing as a consequence. The Frenchman's business was expanding, and his first thoughts were towards his youthful countryman who had already shown an aptitude for figures, and who, having lived in close proximity to the exiled Polish colony in Lorraine, would undoubtedly be a material help. The Duke of Lorraine, Prince Stanislas Leszczynski, born in 1677, had been King of Poland from 1704 to 1709, and his daughter Marie married Louis XV of France in 1725. Stanislas was at that time a fugitive from Poland and virtually a prisoner in France, having been driven out by Peter the Great to make room for Augustus II of Saxony; but he was re-elected King of Poland in 1733. He occupied the throne for even a shorter period than before, abdicating it in January 1736. By the Treaty of Vienna, which followed the War of the Polish Succession, Lorraine, which had belonged to Austria, was annexed by France. Louis XV, anxious to please his indulgent father-in-law (for Marie's two sisters had been numbered among his many mistresses), offered Stanislas the dukedom, which he accepted and retained until his death at Lunéville in 1766.

Stanislas Leszczynski was a patriot, even if he had been unfortunate as a king; and he surrounded himself at Nancy with a court of nobles, headed by the Czartoryskis, which was to become the nursery of the new radicalism, the breeding-ground of the future culture of Poland. This distressful country had

rarely had one of her own blood as a ruler: and if one studies her history one cannot fail to notice that it was during the reigns of two Polish kings, Stanislas Leszczynski and Stanislas Poniatowski, that intellectually and artistically she made the biggest strides. During the reign of the latter king, 1764-1795, when politically she diminished from a powerful country to complete extinction, she reached her finest artistic period; it was the best era for architecture, some of her finest painters were building up a national school, and the years of her catastrophe were followed by the advent of the great exiled Romantic poets, A. Mickiewicz, J. Slowacki and S. Krasinski.

Leszczynski had been dead for five years before the birth of Nicolas Chopin, but his memory was deeply cherished by the large Polish community which remained, even though, at the Duke's death, Lorraine had become an integral part of France. He had been a splendid ruler — a patriot, kind, generous, and full of encouragement for his downhearted fellow-exiles. He was a man of culture, and was the chief force in sowing the seeds of education in his lands. He founded an *Académie Stanislas* at Nancy, from whence educationists, researchers in science and social reformers could return to Poland and spread their knowledge.

The first impressions of Warsaw on the young Nicolas Chopin could not have been very inspiring. He must have known of Poland's troubles, and of her unhappiness caused by the loss of about one-third of her territory by the First Partition in 1772; but he could not have expected such obvious signs of discontent, of anarchy, of suppressed tension as everywhere prevailed. He may have been excited and thrilled by the thronged streets, by the strange mixture of almost every nationality; for Warsaw was a cosmopolitan city in the true sense and exhibited many types of peoples and costumes. It must have been strangely picturesque, very amusing, and wonderfully interesting; but it had not the right note of optimism. This curious medley of European and Oriental was not gathered there for the good of the country. The crowd knew that a turbulence bordering on anarchy existed throughout the land, and that a further crash was imminent; and it wanted to share in the wreckage and partake of the spoils. Poland was ever a

battle-ground, and there is always a motley crew who will follow an army like vultures hovering over a Parsee tower, waiting to seize on anything they see. They belong to the dregs of humanity and are not apt to diffuse much culture.

Whatever his first experiences were, whether pleasing or disheartening, it was not long before Nicolas was conscious of the rocks ahead. He began to study Polish, and to understand the life and manners of the people. He interested himself in the methods of government and no doubt was disgusted with the ridiculous weapon, the *liberum veto*, which more than anything else was the cause of Poland's downfall. The country was run entirely by the nobles, and one dissentient voice could upset any decision, prevent the passing of any law, even the election of a king. A member of the Diet had only to pronounce in Polish the equivalent of 'I do not allow' for the cancellation of that particular law or statute to follow.

Nor can the physical appearance of the country itself have given Nicolas much consolation. According to contemporary writers, Poland was in a state of decay. Her farms were unattended, her live-stock barely existing, being reduced in size and numbers through lack of sufficient food; the farmers themselves were living in abject poverty, miserable and underfed; the houses were tumbling down, and full of lice and vermin. After 1772 the Poles had tried to rebuild their country, tried to maintain their status as a nation that would still count in the affairs of Europe; but that bugbear, the *liberum veto*, thwarted them at every turn. In 1788 a special Diet was called and various reforms proposed, particularly the emancipation of the peasants, which would automatically weaken the powers of the nobles. The whole nation was inspired with a fresh impetus. The nobles, or at least the more sensible ones, were willing to renounce their unfair privileges, and were flocking to the capital. Enthusiasm prevailed. Stanislas Poniatowski, their king, whom Catharine II of Russia had placed on the throne, a man of the highest culture and refinement, was hailed with joy as the deliverer of the people. Russia was at war with Turkey; and Prussia, with her eyes and mouth open for Danzig and Thorn, had no objection to these Polish reforms. She even proposed an alliance which was ratified by

the Diet of 1788, and signed in 1790. The sun was beginning to shine upon Poland. But the astute Catharine, one of the two ablest women who ever sat on a throne, was not so pleased. The Diet met for the last time on May 3, 1791, when Poniatowski scored the greatest triumph of his reign, disclosing the plan of a new Constitution which had freedom as its basis.

This famous Act of Constitution, which should have laid the foundation of a firmer, securer, sounder Poland, dispersing all fears of anarchy and consolidating all the disgruntled factions, was Poland's undoing. Catharine II would have none of it. It would mean the end of her dreams of stretching westward into Europe, and would help to build up a powerful Prussia. Russia declared war on Poland and invaded her territory the following year. Prussia stood aside, forsook her alliance, and was repaid for her treachery by sharing with Russia in the second Partition of Poland in 1793.

During these fretful years, with war-clouds constantly on the horizon, business houses were suffering. The tobacco factory felt the slump, and finally had to close down; Nicolas was out of a job. He tried to return to Lorraine, but a severe illness prevented him. After his recovery his thoughts were occupied only with the liberation of his adopted country. Poland was now very little more than a province of Russia, being only one-sixth of her former size, and naturally could not remain tranquil under the yoke of the grasping and adamant Russian Empress. Poniatowski was a catspaw in her hands, and the Poles were losing all faith in him. A young leader, Kosciusko, appeared, assumed powers amounting to a dictatorship, and instantly set the patriotic Poles ablaze with thoughts of insurrection and vengeance.

Nicolas Chopin joined the army, quickly rose to the rank of captain, and fought in the fierce battle of Maciejowice where Kosciusko was wounded and taken prisoner. How very near the Poles were to winning in this Revolution is known to students of history. Fortunately for himself and for the world ever since, Nicolas and his company were relieved just before the terrible battle for Praga, a suburb of Warsaw, after which occurred one of the world's worst massacres. The Russian General, Suvaroff, ordered annihilation, and the soldiers, with

the cry 'Remember Warsaw' almost completely wiped out the town across the Vistula. Over 10,000 men, women and children were massacred, most of them being non-combatants. The revolution failed, and Poland existed no longer.

Once again Nicolas wanted to return to Lorraine, and once again illness prevented him. What was he to do? How could he keep himself in a foreign land? He knew some important families, but most of them had left Warsaw. The Russians were in complete control, and only the richest and most powerful of the nobles could keep up any kind of establishment. Nicolas thought of giving lessons in French; for the Poles, who had all along been friendly to France, and many of whose soldiers were enlisting in the Polish Legion of Napoleon, were looking to France as the only possible saviour of their country. He felt that as two attempts to return to the land of his birth had been thwarted, a third might prove fatal, and he decided to take his chance in the country he was beginning to love. He had lost all that he possessed, which perhaps was not much, and teaching his mother-tongue seemed to be his only chance of livelihood.

After giving some private lessons – an extremely precarious existence – he accepted a post as tutor in the family of the Starostin Laczynska. (A Starostin is the wife of a Starost – a nobleman upon whom a castle and domains have been conferred by the King.) Among his pupils in this post was the Countess Marie Walewska, who was destined to bear to Napoleon a son who became, as Count Walewski, a prominent figure in the reign of Napoleon III. Nicolas Chopin remained with this family for some time, leaving early in 1800 to accept a similar position with the Countess Skarbek at Zelazowa-Wola. Whilst in her service as tutor to her son, Count Frederick, who became a most distinguished man, Nicolas met his future wife, Justina Krzyzanowska. It is evident that Nicolas was not treated as a servant, but lived with the family on terms of equality. The two families later continued their friendly relations, and the pupil became the godfather of the tutor's son, Frédéric François Chopin. Justina, the mother of Frédéric, and the daughter of an impoverished nobleman, was a personal attendant and lady-in-waiting to the Countess Skarbek. It



CHOPIN'S PARENTS



was usual for the sons and daughters of the poorer nobles to accept such positions.

The marriage of Nicolas Chopin and his bride took place on June 2, 1806, at the village of Zelazowa-Wola, twenty-eight miles from Warsaw, their respective ages being 35 and 24. They had four children, three daughters and one son. The eldest was Louise, born in 1807, who married a Professor Jedrzeiewicz in 1832 and died in 1855. She is credited with having possessed literary gifts of a high order, though she ceased to cultivate them after marriage. Many biographers have written that the second child was a daughter also, but Frédéric was the second child. On the family tombstone in the cemetery of Powazki, Warsaw, the date of the birth of Isabella, the third child, is given as July 9, 1811. She married Anton Barcinski, an Inspector of Schools, to whom Frédéric became very attached, nicknaming him 'Antolo Bartolo'. She died in 1881. The third daughter and youngest child, Emilia, was born in 1813, but only lived fourteen years. She also had literary gifts, and great were the expectations formed for her; but tuberculosis had already got too strong a hold, and the early promise could not be fulfilled. Frédéric had the greatest affection for his youngest sister and deeply mourned her death. In a letter to his friend Jan Bialoblocki, one can see the effect of her illness upon his sensitive nature. On March 14, 1827, he writes:

We have illness in the house. Emilia has been in bed for four weeks; she has got a cough and has begun to spit blood and Mamma is frightened. Malcz ordered blood-letting. They bled her once, twice; leeches without end, vesicators, sinapisms, wolf's-bane; horrors, horrors! – All this time she has been eating nothing; she has grown so thin that you would not know her, and is only now beginning to come to herself a little – You can imagine what it has been like in the house. You'll have to imagine it, because I can't describe it for you.

The year after the marriage of Nicolas and Justina saw the signing of the Treaty of Tilsit, by which Napoleon created the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, bestowing a sense of independence upon the down-trodden Poles. True, the indepen-

dence only lasted eight years – for Russia claimed the Duchy after Napoleon's extermination at Waterloo in 1815 – but during those eight years the Polish patriots worked with almost fanatical zeal. They proceeded with the reforms suggested by the Constitution of 1791, particularly in educational matters. Schools and colleges breathed life afresh, and new buildings were erected. Nicolas benefited by this impetus for learning, and his knowledge of French was a tremendous asset. Those rich Polish families that had deserted the capital during the dark years, either on account of diminished wealth or for fear of invasion, were returning; and amongst them were the Skarbeks. Eight months after the birth of Frédéric, Nicolas, though still the family tutor, accepted the post of Professor of French at the newly-created Lycée in Warsaw. At the beginning of 1812 he was appointed in the same capacity at the School of Artillery, and took a similar position at the Military Preparatory School in 1815. Although fees could not have been high, there are sufficient grounds for believing that the family was never poor in the true sense. The times were hard for everybody, but Nicolas was in constant employment, and was always able to educate his children.

Nicolas Chopin was much beloved by his pupils, and held in the highest respect in the country of his adoption. His strong sense of steadfastness, his integrity, patriotism and dignity assured him the admiration of all who knew him. Count Frederick Skarbek wrote in his memoirs with sincere gratitude of the teachings of his former tutor, and attributed the success of his own career as poet, scientist, man of letters and University Professor to the solid groundings of his early lessons. The fundamental principles upon which all the pupils were taught were patriotism, fine qualities of citizenship, and truthfulness. Nicolas knew that without these foundations the noblemen of the Poland of the future could never hope either to rescue their country from the Russian stranglehold, or to rebuild it to its former greatness. In later life he had to retire from his many arduous duties and live on a pension. The strain of educating his family all through those troublous times had severely undermined his strength, and he was obliged to abandon all work and live a more or less secluded life until his death in

May 1844. After the revolution of 1831 his duties at the Lycée and the military schools automatically ceased; he was then elected to the examining board for schoolmasters, and became a Professor of French at the Academy of the Roman Catholic clergy.

Justina, his wife and the excellent mother of his children, can be summed up by Frédéric's own description of her as 'the best of mothers'. Hers was a lovable personality, and George Sand was for once probably right in characterization when she described her as 'the only woman that he [Frédéric] ever loved'. Karasowski, who knew the family, writes of her that 'she shared all her husband's joys and troubles, was of an exceedingly gentle disposition, and excelled in all womanly virtues. . . . Domestic peace was her highest happiness'. The parents had their full share of family troubles, particularly with the frail health of Frédéric and of the youngest daughter Emilia, both of whom had weak chests; and Emilia's early death was a bitter sorrow. Justina outlived her husband by seventeen years, living with the second daughter, Isabella, after the death of Louise. The early part of her life was devoted to her family, the latter part almost entirely to religious devotions. The Chopins were always devout Roman Catholics, and the consolation of her faith was her only solace after the deaths of her husband and three of her children.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY YEARS AND STUDIES

1810-1822

MANY dates have been given as the exact day of the birth of Frédéric François Chopin. The earlier biographers named 1809 as the year. These include Frederick Niecks, Moritz Karasowski, James Huneker, W. H. Hadow, Charles Willeby, Wodzinski and Madame Audley. The day given by them was March 1. The later writers have with one accord decided on February 22, 1810, substantiating their claim by a document found and published by the Abbé Bielawski in 1893. To convince the reader of the authenticity of this evidence it will be necessary to detail the text of the document:

In the year 1810, on the 23rd of the month of April at three o'clock in the afternoon. Before us, the parish priest of Brochow, district of Sochaczew, department of Warsaw, Nicolas Chopin, father, forty years of age, domiciled in the village of Zelazowa-Wola, presented himself, and showed us a male child, born in his house on February 22nd at 6 o'clock in the evening, this year, declaring that the child was born of him and of Justina Krzyzanowska, his wife, twenty-eight years of age; and that his wish is to give the child two Christian names: Frédéric François.

After having made this declaration he showed us the child in the presence of Joseph Wyrzykowski, steward, thirty-eight years of age, and of Frédéric Geszt, forty years of age, both domiciled in the village of Zelazowa-Wola. The father and both witnesses, having read the birth certificate which was shown to them, declared their ability to sign it. We have signed this present document: Abbé Jan Duchnowski, parish priest of Brochow, fulfilling the function of a civil servant.

(Signed). NICOLAS CHOPIN, father.

Amongst the authorities giving this date as certain are: Grove, Edouard Ganche, Henri Bidou, Guy de Pourtalès, Weissmann, Leichtentritt, Z. Jachimecki and G. C. Ashton-Jonson. G. T.



CHOPIN'S BIRTHPLACE



Ferris in his *Great Musical Composers* and Liszt in his fantasy, which he calls a 'Life of Chopin', published in 1852, give 1810 as the year, mentioning no day, whilst Fétis in his '*Dictionnaire Universel des Musiciens*' says February 8, 1810.

Chopin's family, however, always sent him their greetings for St. Frédéric's Day, March 5, celebrating his birthday at the same time. His sister Louise would send him her greetings for 'the 1st and the 5th of March'. In a letter of Chopin's mother belonging to Jane Stirling, of whom more will be heard later in the biography, these same dates are found in describing an oil portrait of Miroszewski. Frédéric himself maintained that 1810 was the year of his birth, though insisting on March 1 as his birthday. Proof of this can be found in a letter he wrote to the Vice-President of the '*Société Littéraire Polonaise de Paris*' dated January 11, 1833.

The year 1810 can definitely be asserted to be Frédéric Chopin's birth year and much more reliance can be placed on February 22, the date of birth in the official document, than on the composer's assumption. The centenary celebrations were held in 1910, and February 22 was the official date chosen. With all this evidence there should be no further doubt existing, nor should any further claim be made for 1809.

The baptism was performed by the vicar of the local church, Ignace Maryanski, the father's name being given as Nicolas Choppen. The Countess Anna Skarbek and her brother, Count Frederick were to be godmother and godfather respectively, but the young Count had just left for Paris to continue his studies there, and his place was taken by a friend of the father's, François Grebecki.

The family life of the Chopins was simple and homely, yet surrounded by an atmosphere of culture. The small cottage in which the two eldest children were born was an annexe to the country mansion of the Count Skarbek. According to Count Wodzinski it was of mean appearance, and consisted of only three rooms. As we have already seen, Nicolas removed his family to Warsaw soon after Frédéric's birth, and the parents fixed on a little house close to a large park which still remains in the city. Here they were visited by men and women of intellect and refinement, and their home quickly became the

rendezvous of poets, painters, professors and other learned men. Thus the children were brought up with all the blessings that accrue from a home of which virtue, love and simplicity constitute the foundation, the background supplying culture and honourable friendships. No child could wish for a finer upbringing, no genius require a finer soil in which to flourish.

Young Frédéric in his tender years was the despair of his parents, for the sound of music created such apparent hostility within him as to cause inconsolable tears. Both parents were fond of music; we are even led to believe that Nicolas was first attracted to his wife by the appealing quality of her singing. He also played the flute; but the first time he gave the instrument to young Frédéric to play with, Frédéric promptly broke it; and we are not told that it was ever replaced. It was not long before the father and mother discovered that the tears were not the result of antipathy. The tones of the pianoforte produced the tears, maybe, but they were tears of emotion, of passionate joy, and ere long the tiny fellow was clambering up to the keyboard endeavouring to evolve his own sounds. The persistence with which he pestered his mother to allow him to learn resulted in his receiving lessons at the age of four from his elder sister, Louise, then only seven herself. His parents were overjoyed at his progress and apparent aptitude, and, with their usual common sense, looked round for a teacher of worth who would be certain to guide his early footsteps in the proper direction. So we find the boy of six years taking lessons in pianoforte playing from a sound and esteemed musician, Adalbert Zywny.

Zywny was a Czech, born in Bohemia in 1756, who came to Poland during the reign of Stanislas Poniatowski, first occupying the post of court pianist to Prince Casimir Sapieha, and then settling in Warsaw as a teacher until his death as an old man of 86 in 1842. He was a violinist who, finding pupils more readily for the keyed instrument, decided on pianoforte teaching as his principal means of livelihood. He appears to have been an estimable musician. It is known that he composed a goodly number of works, but, if any were published, they have not survived the succeeding generations. That he was kind and encouraging is proved by the affection with which his famous pupil always

spoke of him. Chopin in his later years often alluded to the excellent teaching of his only pianoforte master. Another evidence of his simple and kindly nature can be found in a letter which Niecks prints in his book. This letter was enclosed in a letter of introduction that he gave to a Warsaw pianist, Edouard Wolff, who was visiting Paris. Niecks says: 'The outside of the sheet on which the letter is written bears the words "From the old music-master Adalbert Zywny, kindly to be transmitted to my best friend, Mr. Frédéric Chopin, in Paris."' The letter itself runs as follows:

DEAREST MR. F. CHOPIN, —

Wishing you perfect health I have the honour to write to you through Mr. Edouard Wolff. I recommend him to your esteemed friendship. Your whole family and I had also the pleasure of hearing at his concert the *Adagio* and *Rondo* from your Concerto, which called up in our minds the most agreeable remembrance of you. May God give you every prosperity! We are all well, and wish so much to see you again. Meanwhile I send you through Mr. Wolff my heartiest kiss, and recommending myself to your esteemed friendship, I remain your faithful friend,

ADALBERT ZYWNY.

WARSAW, the 12th June, 1835.

Zywny had saturated himself with the then known works of the great Johann Sebastian Bach, and punctiliously taught his more talented pupils to admire and understand the music of the great polyphonist. Liszt describes Zywny as 'a passionate disciple of Sebastian Bach who during many years directed the boy's studies in accordance with strictly classical models'. He probably was never a good performer, but he was able to give his precocious pupil a solid grounding in the rudiments of the art. His appearance was grotesque in the extreme. His favourite colour for dress seems to have been yellow, for often both coat and trousers were of that hue, and he invariably wore a yellow waistcoat. The cut of his clothes was amusing, and he always carried an extravagantly coloured handkerchief.

The first recorded public performance of Chopin was on his eighth birthday. A charity concert had been organized

by the great poet, man of letters and statesman, Ursin Niemcewicz, and Frédéric was asked to play. He chose a concerto by Adalbert Gyrowetz, a Viennese musician of renown in his day but long since forgotten. The audience consisted chiefly of the most important and influential Polish families, and the boy's success was so complete and his personality so charming that he at once became the 'lion' of the aristocracy, with invitations to the houses of many princely families.

It was after this concert that the well-known childish remark was made by Frédéric. He was dressed like an English boy – short knickerbockers, and a large collar over a velvet jacket. On his return home, his mother, who had not been present, asked him what the public admired most. The boy, without a moment's hesitation, replied 'My collar, Mamma'. His *naïveté* shows that so far he was unspoilt, that the praise of his admirers had not affected him, that he was ignorant of his great talent, and, more important still, that his family were educating him wisely. Lack of conceit is strongly apparent throughout his life, despite his aristocratic airs and his affectedly snobbish ways.

This moment marks the beginning of his association with the leaders of polite society, a fondness for which he retained all through his life. His preference for the nobility, for the perfection of their manners and the obvious signs of their culture, was an essential part of him. He had a strong dislike for coarseness and vulgarity, and would never tolerate bad manners. At that time the aristocracy of Poland was probably the most distinguished in Europe; its members had been used to almost fantastic wealth in the preceding decades, and the fact that they were now poorer probably made them all the more exclusive. Chopin never forgot the tastes and refinements that he assimilated in these years of contact with the noble families.

Amongst the many princesses whom he had occasion to meet was the Princess Lowicka, wife of the Grand Duke Constantine, who, as Commander-in-Chief and brother of the Czar of Russia, was virtually Poland's ruler. He was both friend and enemy of Poland, a man of the most violent temper and capable of extreme brutality; yet he was willing to help Poland in the

revolution of 1831, though the Poles foolishly turned down his offer. The Princess Lowicka had caused him to renounce his right to the Russian throne, and the same power of beauty was able to soften and occasionally lessen the vindictive hatred he frequently showed towards his subjects. Frédéric was often invited to her salon, and became intimate with her son, Paul. One day the Grand Duke was listening to Frédéric, and suddenly asked why the boy always looked up at the ceiling while he was playing, and if he could read the notes up there. With his hard nature and military upbringing, Constantine could not understand the sensitiveness of the young mind at work. But that he conceived a liking for the boy can be proved by his frequent sending of the ducal carriage, with its four magnificent horses all abreast, and a cossack on each, to Frédéric's home – occasions which caused wonderment to the Chopin neighbours. Prince Paul was usually accompanied by his Polish tutor, the Count de Moriollles, to whose daughter Chopin dedicated his *Rondo in F major*, Op. 5.

A distinguished Italian singer, Madame Catalani, was enjoying public favour in an expensive series of concerts in Warsaw during the summer of 1820. She had heard of the talent of young Chopin and expressed a wish to hear him play; and she was so attracted by his prowess and his boyish charm that she gave him a gold watch on which was engraved: *Donné par Madame Catalani à Frédéric Chopin, âgé de dix ans*. Liszt maintains that this was the only method by which Chopin knew his age. Besides serving such a useful purpose, the gift was treasured by Chopin, who would often talk about it and show it to his friends in his later life.

During these first years of his studies, which, after all, cannot be claimed as serious, he often attempted composition. His favourite occupation was to sit at his pianoforte and improvise. He would allow his fingers to roam over the keyboard, at first hardly knowing where they were going. Gradually these meanderings assumed more shape, and ere long would develop into concrete expressions of his thoughts and feelings. All his life he possessed a wonderful gift for improvisation, and probably has never been equalled in this particular domain. Between the ages of 10 and 14, before he seriously tackled the

sterner studies necessary for life's encounter, he became quite famous for the musicianship and facility of his impromptu playing. Out of this grew the desire for putting his thoughts down on paper. He had not the knowledge to do this, nor had he the extraordinary genius of Mozart, so he was forced to rely on old Zywny to write them out for him. A march was composed and dedicated to the Grand Duke Constantine. It had been scored for military band, and the Duke arranged for its performance; it was then printed, but without the name of the composer.

Frédéric's father, aware of the boy's increasing desire to compose, was sensible enough not to discourage his efforts, and had perforce to find a master who could teach him the art and science of writing music. Once again the choice was a happy one. It fell on Joseph Elsner, the son of a manufacturer of musical instruments in the town of Grotkau in Silesia. Elsner was born on June 1, 1769, and was destined for the medical profession by the wish of his father. He was first of all sent to a college in Breslau, and later to the University of Vienna. Whilst at Breslau he had lessons in harmony from a well-known musician of his time, Adolf Foerster. He had a voice good enough to enable him to be a chorister, and took violin lessons as well, to such purpose that we find him playing in the theatre. At twenty-two he finally decided to renounce the profession of medicine for the more precarious one of music, and installed himself as leader of the orchestra in the Austrian town of Brünn. The following year he migrated to Lemberg in the same capacity, and in 1799 to Warsaw, this time as music-director at the National Theatre. In these positions he learnt the value of experience, and developed an aptitude for writing in more or less every form of musical expression. Warsaw became his permanent home; he lived there until his death on April 18, 1854. Chopin died before middle age, but his two teachers lived a great deal longer than the average span, for one died at 86 and the other at 85.

Elsner was a far more important musician than Zywny, not only because he was such a productive composer (for he left works of almost every kind, including twenty-seven operas in the Polish language), but because of the tremendous influence

he had on future Polish music. His energy and capacity for work must have been amazing, for he was a prolific writer, as well as a conductor, a successful teacher, and a great organizer. While Poland was expanding in every way during the hopeful period as a Grand Duchy, at the time when Alexander of Russia was trying to fulfil his promises to her for her future independence, Elsner was appointed Director of the newly opened Conservatorium of Music. This institution was one of the many outward signs of culture in Poland at that time, which the Revolution of 1831 finally blotted out. Elsner was its only director, 1821-1830.

As a composer Elsner has not survived till the twentieth century, but his works won great renown for him during the greater part of the nineteenth. His output convinces us of his fluency in composition, and he showed great aptitude in writing for the voice, more particularly in his Church music. Fétis says that his works were in the style of Paër and Mayer; that his music for the Church was too dramatic and too modern in form; that one finds facility and a natural ability for making the voices sing, but that he had too little originality and variety in his ideas. He wrote with purity, but his fugues do not give proof of severe study.

I feel that it is necessary to paint still further the personality and accomplishments of this lovable old man, for he was Chopin's only teacher of the laws and forms of music, and the shortcomings of Chopin as a composer will best be understood by a more complete knowledge of his master. To give the reader this fuller impression I cannot do better than include part of the description sent by a travelling musician to the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1841. I quote the translation used by Frederick Niecks.

The first musical person of the town [Warsaw] is still the old, youthful Joseph Elsner, a veteran master of our art, who is as amiable as he is truly estimable. In our day one hardly meets with a notable Polish musician who has not studied composition under Pan [i.e., Mr.] Elsner; and he loves all his pupils, and all speak of him with enthusiasm, and, according to the Polish fashion, kiss the old master's shoulder, whereupon he never forgets to kiss them heartily on both cheeks. . . .

Wisocki, the pianist, also a pupil of his, took me to him. Pan Elsner lives in the Dom Pyarow [House of Piarists]. One has to start early if one wishes to find him at home; for soon after breakfast he goes out, and rarely returns to his cell before evening. He inhabits, like a genuine church composer, two cells of the old Piarist Monastery in Jesuit Street. . . . The old gentleman was still in bed when we arrived, and sent his servant to ask us to wait a little in the anteroom, promising to be with us immediately. All the walls of this room, or rather cell, were hung to the ceiling with portraits of musicians, among them some very rare names and faces. Mr. Elsner has continued this collection down to the present time; also the portraits of Liszt, Thalberg, Chopin, and Clara Wieck shine down from the old monastic walls. I had scarcely looked about me in this large company for a few minutes, when the door of the adjoining room opened, and a man of medium height (not to say little), somewhat stout, with a round, friendly countenance, grey hair, but very lively eyes, enveloped in a warm fur dressing-gown, stepped up to us, comfortably but quickly, and bade us welcome. Wisocki kissed him, according to the Polish fashion, as a token of respect, on the right shoulder, and introduced me to him, whereupon the old friendly gentleman shook hands with me and said some kindly words.

This, then, was Pan Joseph Elsner, the ancestor of modern Polish music, the teacher of Chopin, the fine connoisseur and cautious guide of original talents. For he does not do as is done only too often by other teachers in the arts, who insist on screwing all pupils to the same turning-lathe on which they themselves were formed, who always do their utmost to ingraft their own I on the pupil, so that he may become as excellent a man as they imagine themselves to be. Joseph Elsner did not proceed thus. When all the people of Warsaw thought Frederick Chopin was entering on a wrong path, that his was not music at all, that he must keep to Himmel and Hummel, otherwise he would never do anything decent – the clever Pan Elsner had already very clearly perceived what a poetic kernel there was in the pale young dreamer, had long before felt very clearly that he had before him the founder of a new epoch of pianoforte-playing, and was far from laying upon him a cavesson, knowing well that such a noble thoroughbred may indeed be cautiously led, but must not be trained and fettered in the usual way if he is to conquer.

We are told by some writers that Frédéric at the age of twelve could play as well as his master, Zywny. I am inclined to think that he already played a good deal better, for probably Zywny was never an able performer, and the boy, as we have seen, had been able to play the concerto of Gyrowetz when he was eight, and had practised assiduously from then onwards. With his great natural ability and his keenness to master technical difficulties, he must have attained a considerable command over the keyboard in the intervening four years. But though Zywny may not have possessed much finger facility, he certainly knew and understood the inner purport of the music he taught, and laid the foundation for a natural and sensitive appreciation of the art. He was convinced, as all sensible teachers should be, that he could not handle a genius in the same way as an ordinary pupil – that the only method in such a case is to allow the instincts to develop naturally, and to guide and refine the musical tastes. With this plan of action the parents agreed, and the natural outcome was the finding of Elsner, who was to direct the boy's studies in harmony and counterpoint. We can then conjecture that Chopin did not receive any more lessons in pianoforte playing after the year 1821 or early 1822. Zywny could teach him nothing more, and Elsner had no pretensions to being a pianist. There was a far better pianist than Zywny in the town, Wenzel W. Würfel, but he was not approached to help in developing the boy's fingers.

Elsner, a man of a higher grade than Zywny both intellectually and musically, was still more sensible in guiding the young mind. Evidently he was something of a philosopher, for he originated a number of maxims. These maxims are usually supposed to have been for Chopin's edification, but I think that they were for general consumption. Among them one can choose: 'The pupil should never be permitted to spend too much time on one method, or on one point of view.' 'Only to think of playing the pianoforte is false, it should be considered as a means towards a complete understanding of the art of music.' 'The study of composition should not be controlled by the observance of too many minute rules.' 'It is not sufficient that the pupil should equal or surpass his master, he should

create an individuality of his own.' 'An artist should be subservient to his surroundings, only by these and through these influences can he attain his real self.' Liszt says that Elsner imparted to Frédéric 'the secret so seldom known, of being exacting towards himself, and placing proper value on those advantages which are only to be secured by much patience and labour'.

It is related that someone found fault with the young composer's neglect of the usual rules of composition. 'Leave him alone,' said Elsner, 'he follows an unusual path because his gifts are unusual. He does not follow any traditional method closely, because he has a method of his own, and he will reveal in his works an originality that has never been met before in such a high degree.' One must admire the good sense of this, but was it not an easy way out for the philosophical old musician? It must be apparent to any serious student nowadays that this calm negation of the strict rules of harmony and counterpoint reacted most pointedly upon the composer in later years. Had Elsner been more severe on the young student, making him master the art of contrapuntal writing, and instilling into him a method of quicker and neater transcription of his thoughts, the Chopin of later years would not have experienced such difficulties in putting his wonderful and inexhaustible inspirations down on paper. Chopin was forced to spend a great deal of time in his later life correcting, remodelling and shaping his compositions, time which he resented and the saving of which would have been of the greatest benefit to his health. It might all have been saved had he been a better craftsman. Elsner could not have driven away the boy's originality, he could not have damped his ardour, nor could he have stopped the flow of melodies. Undoubtedly he was sincere in his attitude, and most sympathetic professors would do the same to-day; but not even a genius can write music without being a master of all the tributary rules and formulae, for, curiously enough, the greater the talent for anything the greater the work necessary for perfecting it. Probably no one had such a never-ending flow of melodies and so many moments of genuine inspiration as Chopin, yet no other great composer had such difficulty in producing the finished article. We

shall come across many proofs of this in the analysis of his works.

The friendship and love fostered between master and pupil was maintained until Chopin's death. Their letters were affectionate; on the master's side, perhaps fatherly and full of counsel, on the pupil's, grateful and respectful. In a letter to his friend, Titus Wojciechowski, dated April 10, 1830, telling him of the press criticisms of his concerts in Warsaw, Frédéric sticks up for Elsner:

You must know in that article the Official Bulletin declared that the Poles should be as proud of me as the Germans are of Mozart; obvious nonsense. But in the same article the writer says that if I had fallen into the hands of some pedant or Rossinist – which is a stupid term – I should not have been what I am. I am nothing, but he is right in saying that, if I had not been taught by Elsner, who imbued me with convictions, I should doubtless have accomplished still less than I now have. This sneer against Rossinists and indirect praise of Elsner infuriated you know whom.

Chopin, on one occasion in Vienna, was very upset by a remark that the Viennese musicians were astonished that he should have acquired all his knowledge in Warsaw. He bitterly answered: 'From such fine men as Zywny and Elsner even the greatest ass must learn something.' At the end of a letter to Elsner, dated November 8, 1842, from Paris, Chopin writes: 'I embrace you heartily. I love you still, as a son, as an old son, as an old friend.' A teacher who could inspire such cordial affection and reverence must have been a great-hearted and lovable man.

## CHAPTER III

### SCHOOL-DAYS

1822-1825

SIR HENRY HADOW in his excellent study of Chopin describes the appearance of the boy Frédéric in these words: 'A little, frail, delicate elf of a boy, with fair hair and a prominent nose, the face redeemed from ugliness by the wonderful brown eyes and the quick intelligence of expression: a temperament which was keen, nervous and changeable, a character rapid and alert, bubbling over with effervescent spirits, playful, affectionate and sensitive. He was already an accomplished actor and a born mimic, full of odd sayings and harmless mischief, clever and imaginative, utterly devoid of self-consciousness or affectation.'

Two letters, one in verse, written when he was six, the other in prose, at eight, will show the fertility of his imagination. They were little birthday remembrances to his father.

When the world declares the festivity of your nameday, my Papa, it brings joy to me also, with these wishes; that you may live happily, may not know grievous cares, that God may always favour you with the fate you desire, these wishes I express for your sake.

F. CHOPIN. 6 *December*, 1816.

DEAR PAPA! —

I could express my feelings more easily if they could be put into notes of music, but as the very best concert would not cover my affection for you, dear Daddy, I must use the simple words of my heart, to lay before you my utmost gratitude and filial affection.

F. CHOPIN. 6 *December*, 1818.

Liszt writes that 'he was sickly and delicate, and the attention of his family was concentrated upon his health. . . . The little fellow was indeed seen to be suffering, but was always

trying to smile, patient, and, to all seeming, happy.' I think that Liszt was misinformed. I cannot find any proof that Frédéric was 'sickly and delicate', nor that his family were concerned about his frailty. He probably was not particularly robust, but the reason for this may well have been that his mind was more active than his limbs – that he preferred to read or think or play his beloved instrument rather than indulge in the outdoor games and pranks of the average healthy boy. The absence of physical exercise and fresh air would doubtless help to dwarf his body, and give him a pale countenance; but, on the other hand, if he had given more time to his physical development, would he not have lost some of his exquisite sensibility? A body made up of sterner stuff might not have housed a mind of such delicacy.

During the two years which elapsed between his first lessons with Elsner and his entering the Lycée, i.e. from the age of twelve to fourteen, Frédéric spent most of his time at his music. The careful parents had not thwarted this pleasant occupation, but neither had they given thought to the choice of music as his profession and livelihood. The boy was not old enough to worry about such mundane affairs; it was sufficient that he could devote his time to discovering new fields of thought, new avenues of progress. Certain technical difficulties he could not solve. He had no one to help him; he must rely on his own inventive brain. According to Karasowski he was 'impressed by the good effect of a chord with the dominant in the higher octave, but unable to play it with his small hand he endeavoured to produce the desired expansion by a mechanical contrivance of his own manufacture which he kept between his fingers even during the night'. It is well that he conceived such a dangerous apparatus at such a tender age. Had he waited, like Schumann, until manhood, he would most probably have injured himself also, although his invention showed much more common sense than that of Schumann. The reader can now see the birth of those elongated stretches which prevail everywhere in Chopin's music, particularly for the left hand. But we must not imagine that Chopin invented his contrivance so that he could write more awkwardly for the pianoforte, or that he wished for greater difficulties; his object

was to satisfy his ear. This method of writing extended chords, the use of stretched arpeggios, was his first experiment in pianoforte writing: it not only became his most striking characteristic, but is undeniably the bridge between classical and modern pianoforte technique.

In 1824, at the age of fourteen, he was entered as a pupil at the Warsaw Lycée. Until then he had been taught at home with several boarders whom his father took to supplement his income. Frédéric was able to enter a fairly high class owing to the good grounding that his father gave to the boys. As we have seen, he was intelligent and had great application, and at first was very successful in his classes, winning many prizes. Later on his lessons grew more irksome; his thoughts inclined towards his music, and the concentration necessary to pass his final examination could not be mustered. He wrote in June 1826 to Jan Bialoblocki: 'That I can't write very often counts for nothing; you know that I am swatting for a diploma, but that sausage isn't for this dog: we hear a good deal about one-year students.' Opienski, the collector of the letters, adds a note saying that 'Chopin was one of the "one-year students" for whom the normal two years in Class 6 was reduced to one. He did not, however, take the examination but went to Reinertz for his health, before the date.'

The early promise of brilliance as a student was not fulfilled. Maybe the parents were as much to blame, if blame there be, as the boy himself, for they had realized before his final school year, 1827, that nothing could prevent him from becoming a musician. They were both fond of music; in fact, they belonged to that minority which is not only interested in the arts but definitely shows a preference for those gifted people who are able to express the beautiful and the sensitive in life. How fortunate are such people; how much of the true joy of living do their opposites miss! The parents knew that Frédéric could never be a scholar; any other profession was out of the question; Warsaw was in too perilous a state and too much in the hands of the Russians and the Jews to promise a business career, and the boy was not physically able to do manual work. Besides, what right had they, or have any parents, to ignore a talent so obvious and so absorbing as that of their son? And so the

boy was excused from too much attention to his lessons, and his music encouraged.

A story of an event which happened in the school-days before Frédéric entered the Lycée is told by Karasowski in his book. Though the author was a friend of the Chopin family and the story was told him by Count Casimir Wodzinski, who was a fellow-boarder, it has about it that ring of incredibility that, unfortunately, surrounds many of the Chopin legends. On a certain day, the assistant master, Barcinski, entered the room to find it in a turmoil. Nicolas Chopin was out, and the boys had decided to be unruly. Barcinski was powerless. Frédéric heard the noise, quietly entered the room and asked his fellow-pupils to sit down. He promised to tell them a story and play to them on the pianoforte if they would promise to be quiet. At once they agreed, and Frédéric put out all the lights. His story was about some robbers who were approaching a house with the purpose of plundering it. They had brought ladders with them to reach the high windows, but just when everything was ready a noise from within frightened them, and away they ran. They were so terrified that they did not stop until they reached a wood where they hoped the thick branches would hide them. The darkness and quiet of the woods made them drowsy, and ere long they were all fast asleep. During the story Frédéric had been playing the pianoforte. When the robbers reached the forest his playing grew softer and softer until in the end it had apparently gone to sleep also. The boys had been bewitched into sleep by the quietness of his playing. Frédéric then crept out of the room. He told the family of his achievement, and made all of them return with him to see for themselves, carrying their own candles. When they had all entered he sat at the pianoforte, and pounded out a crashing chord which thoroughly waked the slumberers with a start. The moment after, all was laughter, and peace was restored in the class-room. This far-fetched anecdote has even been the subject of a picture.

Franz Liszt makes another doubtful statement in his freely-drawn picture of Chopin. He maintains that the boy's studies at the Lycée were paid for by Prince Radziwill. There are many reasons for disputing this assertion. Nicolaŝ was not so

poor that he could not send his only son to the high school; and the family categorically denied any protection offered by the Prince, or even any help given. If the Prince thought so highly of the boy's musical talent, why did he pay for his schooling and not make any offer towards his trips to Vienna, which were a distinct drain on the father's pocket? Again, Chopin was always punctilious in his gratitude and thanks for any help or kindness, but there is no record of any letter or other appreciative sign to Prince Radziwill.

Karasowski is adamant about the inaccuracy of this concoction of Liszt, and bemoans the fact that it has been repeated over and over again, even by Polish authors. To understand this attitude a little more clearly the reader must recognize that Liszt always insisted that the Chopins were very poor, even perhaps to the peasant level, and Karasowski makes them out to be of almost noble birth. A few passages about this supposed benevolence may be quoted in Liszt's own words: 'Through the generous and discriminating protection which was always accorded by Prince Antoine Radziwill to the arts and to genius, which he had the faculty of recognizing both as an intellectual man and a distinguished artist, Chopin was early placed at one of the leading colleges in Warsaw. . . . By thus assisting the limited means of the Chopin family, the Prince bestowed upon Frédéric the inestimable gift of a complete education of which no single department was neglected. . . . The Prince regularly paid Chopin's pension from his first entrance into the college until his studies were completed.' This certainly bears the stamp of conclusiveness, but it is by no means bullet-proof. The Prince was a patron of the arts, for, besides being a very rich man and one of the most influential men in Poland, he had great aspirations as a composer himself. He was a fair tenor singer, an able violoncellist, maintained a string quartet for regular performances of the best music, often being the 'cellist himself, and undoubtedly befriended musicians generally, through the musical parties and soirées he gave at his various houses. He was related to the Emperor Frederick William III of Prussia by marriage, and was Governor of the newly formed Grand Duchy of Posen, which had just been created by the Prussian Government. He was therefore a man of

importance in Berlin, and knew and entertained the leading artists and musicians of the day. Liszt, with his usual flamboyancy, describes a work of Prince Radziwill, a setting he made to the first part of Goethe's *Faust*, as being 'far superior to any other attempts which have been made to transport it into the sphere of music'. We can be quite certain that such a man would recognize young Chopin's genius, but we cannot be so easily convinced that this recognition meant being his benefactor. Nicolas Chopin was a man of pride, and would not have accepted outside help for his children's education unless he was forced to do so; and this was never necessary. Frédéric inherited this pride, as we shall see during his development as a man and as an artist, and could not have forgotten such liberality; yet the only evidence we have of any recognition of this supposed inestimable help was the dedication of his *Trio* for Pianoforte, Violin, and Violoncello, Op. 8, which he started in 1828 and finished the following year. We shall notice that Chopin paid a visit to the country home of the Prince during the autumn of 1829; most probably they played some chamber-music together, and as a thank-offering Chopin inscribed the Prince's name on the title-page of the *Trio*. If this was a token of gratitude to a benefactor, it is hardly likely that the benefactor would, as the Prince did, have sent the protégé a present. Another reason for discrediting Liszt's assertion is his mention of 'the gift of a complete education'. Chopin did not have a 'complete' education. He left the Lycée at seventeen, and only just passed his final examination. He did not wish to persevere with his studies, nor had he devoted much time to them during the latter half of his schooling. His music was too absorbing.

But is not all this to the good? We only want him to develop as a musician, and we are not disappointed. Perhaps an over-developed mind might have altered his outlook, might have driven him away from his love for the simple national tunes and rhythms of his country, which are the backbone of his inspirations. He became one of the greatest figures in the art that he adored: if he had become only a scholar, his name would probably have been forgotten with his death and his place taken by an equal or a better. His name has been invincible ever since and will continue to be so. The superior

education of a University is a colossal asset, but it rarely has anything to do with the making of a musician. It may develop an æsthetic taste, but it cannot develop sensitiveness, nor produce deep emotion, nor create rhythms, nor inspire melodies. These are divine gifts which the possessor must work out for himself and which are so enveloping as to preclude the invasion of their intimacy by any deterring factor.

The boy Frédéric had one other great gift – he could have become a great actor. He was an irrepressible mimic and could alter his appearance in an almost unbelievable manner. He had besides a fine gift of caricature, which was apt to get him into trouble on occasions. Once at the Lycée he caricatured the Director, Dr. Samuel Linde. This Dr. Linde was a friend of the Chopins, and a frequent guest at their house, so probably took a lenient view of the student's joke. He evidently appreciated the drawing, for, instead of punishing the artist, which he had full reason for doing, inasmuch as the fellow-students were uproariously amused by their colleague's effort, he returned it with written words of praise.

Frédéric never lost his talent for acting. He often acted in playlets written in conjunction with one or more of his sisters and received high compliments on his abilities. Later on, in his Paris days, we read of the admiration of many of his illustrious friends for his inimitable gift for quickly changing his facial expression. As these friends included people like Balzac, Heine, Liszt and George Sand we can feel a security about the value of their criticisms. There is a recorded instance of his gift of mimicry. A certain German pastor of an Evangelical church in Warsaw was wont to deliver his sermons in Polish and German on alternate Sundays, owing to the mixture of nationalities in his congregation. His Polish approached the grotesque, and Frédéric, hearing of this, secretly went to a service. He was not disappointed, but he thought that his family should share his huge enjoyment, and so conceived a practical demonstration. He built up an imitation pulpit, set up the chairs, dressed himself up to appear like an old German, and proceeded to deliver a sermon in this jargon of broken Polish. The joke succeeded, his parents and sisters nearly choking with laughter at his absurd skit. He was always playing pranks upon his

family or his friends, but sometimes he was rude enough to attempt them with strangers, particularly Jews, from whom he always had a distinct aversion.

In the summer of 1824 he went for his holidays to Szafarnia, Mazowia (the province in which he was born), to the home of the parents of one of his friends, Dominic Dziewanowski. It was during this happy visit that the first issue of the *Szafarski Courier* appeared. Earlier in the year, Frédéric and Emilia founded a 'Literary Amusement Journal' for the especial benefit of the school-boarders. The pleasure of editing this stimulated him to attempt something bigger, so, instead of writing letters to his parents, copies of the *Courier* were sent, written in the local dialect. The editor calls himself 'Mr. Pichon', an anagram of Chopin. The paper had a censor – the daughter of the house. The news-items are chiefly jokes and gibes, and clearly illustrate the humorous trend of the young musician's mind. Sarcasm is there, and sneers at the musical tastes and abilities of various people. A few excerpts of the news-items will show the different aspects of his humour:

*August 16, 1824.* On August 11, Frédéric Chopin Esquire went for a ride on a charger. He ran several races, but each time failed to get past Madame Dziewanowska, who was going on foot, (but that was the horse's fault, not his). He won a victory, however, over Miss Ludvika, who had got fairly near the goal. Chopin Esquire goes out for a drive but with such honours that he always sits with his back to the horses. . . . On August 13 Better Esq. played on the piano with uncommon talent. This virtuoso, a native of Berlin, played like Berger, the Skolimov piano-player; in skill and in his manners of holding his fingers he excels Miss Laguska, and he plays with such feeling, that almost every note seems to come not from his heart, but from his powerful belly.

This is intended as a gibe at the bodily contortions of most of the players of Chopin's young days. He could not bear these ridiculous and unnecessary movements, and even as a famous man in Paris would amuse his friends by 'taking-off' these absurd people.

M. Pichon was usually entertaining about the farm stock:

On August 12 a hen went lame, and a drake, fighting with a goose, lost a leg. A cow got so ill that it is grazing in the garden. . . . On August 14 a decree went forth that, on pain of death, no pig should dare to enter the garden. . . . In a neighbouring village a fox ate two defenceless ganders. If anyone catches him let him inform the local Law Court which will undoubtedly punish the animal according to law.

The melancholy gobbler, the turkey's brother, got rotten fever from grief and lies without hope of life. . . . A drake, stealing out of the poultry yard very early one morning, drowned itself. Up to the present the reason of this suicide cannot be determined, as the family of the suicide won't say a word. . . . At Radomin on the 29th a cat went mad. Fortunately it did not bite anyone, but ran and jumped in the field, and that only till it was killed, for after it was killed it stopped and didn't play the fool any more.

A more personal note is struck by the following:

On the 1st of September, 1824, Pichon Esq. was playing the Village Jew Merchant on the piano, when Mr. Dziewanowski called the village Jew milkman and asked him for his opinion of the Yiddish Virtuoso. Mose came up to the window, poked his humpy, lofty nose into the room, and listened, saying that if Pichon Esq. would consent to play at a Yiddish wedding, he would earn at least two thalers (about eighteenpence). This pronouncement encouraged Pichon Esq. to study that kind of music, as much as possible, and, who knows, perhaps he may devote himself altogether to such profitable harmony.

Also concerning Jews are the following two items:

A Jew milkman at Rodzona was letting his calf feed in the Manor cornfield. It went off all right several times, but on the night of the 24th a wolf came and ate the beast. The lord of the manor is glad that the Jew was paid this way for his nefarious conduct, but the old Jew is mad with the wolf. He is offering the whole calf to anyone to deliver the culprit to him. – On the 29th August a cart full of Jews was driving along. Die ganze Familie consisted of an old sow, three big Jews, two little

Jews, and six head of Jew children. The whole lot were sitting in a heap, like Dutch herrings. Then a stone in their way upset them, the cart was over-turned and they lay on the sand in the following order: First of all the kids, each one in a different position, most of them with their thin legs in the air, and, on them, the old sow, groaning under a load of Jews, who in their flight and with the impetus of their fall, lost their black skull caps.

Whilst at Szafarnia Frédéric wrote a witty letter to one of his schoolboy friends, Wilhelm Kolberg. His heart was ever warm for his friends and his letters are mostly very affectionate. One cannot say that he was a master letter-writer, although he could be entertaining. Unfortunately most of his letters were destroyed by a fire at his sister's house in Warsaw in 1863, but nearly all those that are available have been collected by Henry Opienski, and published by Desmond Harmsworth, Ltd., 1932. This youthful letter has no literary value, but its childish simplicity makes amusing reading.

SZAFARNIA,

19 August, 1824.

DEAR WILUS, -

Thanks for remembering me; but on the other hand I am annoyed with you, that you are such a mean and horrid etcetera and only write such a scrap to me. Were you short of paper and pens, or did you grudge the ink? Perhaps you had no time to do more than put in a scrawl? Eh, eh, that's it; you go horseback riding, enjoying yourself, and forget about me -. Well, well; give me a kiss and I'll forgive you. I'm glad you're well and jolly, because that's what is wanted in the country. I'm so glad I can write to you! Also am enjoying myself; and you're not the only one that rides, for I can stick on too. Don't ask how well; but I can, enough for the horse to go slowly whenever he prefers, while I sit fearfully on his back; like a monkey on a bear. Till now I haven't had any falls because the horse hasn't thrown me off; but - if ever he should want me to tumble off, I may do it some day.

I won't bother you with my affairs, because I know they won't interest you. The flies often alight on my lofty nose, but that's unimportant, because it's rather a custom of these im-

portunate beasties. The gnats bite me; but that doesn't matter, because it's not on the nose. I run about the garden and sometimes walk. I walk in the woods, and sometimes ride, not on horseback but in a carriage, or trap, or coach; but with such honour that I always sit at the back, never in front. Perhaps I've bored you already, but what can I do? If not, then write by the first post, and I will continue my epistles at once.

I end my letter therefore without compliments, but amicably. Keep well, dear Wilus, and please do write to me. We shall meet in four weeks. I embrace you heartily.

Your sincere friend,

F. CHOPIN.

## CHAPTER IV

### ADOLESCENCE

1825 - 1828

DURING the four years that succeeded 1820 Frédéric had few opportunities for public playing, and his parents and advisers seem to have prevented him from being exploited. His studies with Elsner had not borne any fruit as yet, although he was for ever improvising. As has been seen in the previous chapter, he had been dabbling in several branches of culture, trying his hand as a dramatist, as an editor, as an actor and as an artist; but at the same time he had been working at harmony and counterpoint, and trying to compose songs and variations. It was a period of development, without that development taking any distinctive form. Neither the boy nor his parents had decided which was his special bent. He certainly was precocious, but his talents were wayward, and could not be directed into any particular route. His mind was too restless, his energies were too versatile.

The year 1825 was a turning-point in his life. Certain events occurred during this year that determined his career, and left no shadow of doubt in the minds of either himself or his parents as to what was to be his *métier*. Frédéric was asked to play at one of two concerts organized by a friend of the family, Joseph Javurek. The concerts took place on May 27 and June 10, and he played the first movement (*Allegro*) of the *G minor Concerto* of Moscheles, and improvised on a new instrument, the *Æolopantaleon*; this was a combination of the *Æolo-melodicon* (a species of organ) and the pianoforte, and was invented by a cabinet-maker named Dlugosz, and constructed by a man named Brunner, both of Warsaw. According to Karasowski the performance awakened unbounded enthusiasm, though Niecks is not so sure about it. A correspondent of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig wrote of Chopin's playing that he 'distinguished himself in his improvisation by a wealth of musical ideas, and under his hands this instrument

[the *Æolopantaleon*], of which he is a thorough master, made a great impression'.

Alexander I of Russia came to Warsaw to open the third Diet on May 13, 1825. He left again a month later, and the visit proved to be his last, for he died on December 1 of the same year. During his stay he expressed a desire to hear the new invention; Chopin was deputed to show it off, and pleased the Emperor so much by his performance that he was presented with a diamond ring.

These appearances were by no means the only excitements for the young musician during the year. He was to have the thrill of seeing the publication of his Opus 1, the *Rondo in G minor*, which is dedicated to Madame de Linde, the wife of the Rector of the Lycée of Warsaw. The occasion was of paramount importance to young Chopin, and was to be his greatest spur. The works will be discussed in detail in a later volume devoted to their analysis; all that will here be necessary is to mention matters of interest concerning their writing and their publication.

The *Rondo*, Op. 1, was by no means Frédéric's first serious composition. There is a *Polonaise in G sharp minor* which Breitkopf and Härtel date 1822, though it is difficult to believe that it was written earlier than the one in *B flat minor*, which is dated 1826; the *G sharp minor* is more mature, both technically and musically. The *Polonaise in B flat minor* is supposed to be a 'Farewell to Wilhelm Kolberg'. In the Breitkopf edition it has two footnotes, the first saying that it was written on Chopin's departure for Reinertz, the second, that the trio was written because 'some days before Chopin's departure the two friends had been present at a performance of Rossini's opera'. The trio is headed '*Au revoir!* after an air from *Gazza Ladra*'.

There are also two *Mazurkas*, in G and B flat, belonging to 1825, and assuredly these, with the *Variations sur un air national allemand*, published posthumously in 1851, were written before the Opus 1. Breitkopf dated the *Variations* 1824. Robert Schumann was certainly under the same impression about these early works, for in a letter to Clara Schumann's father, Friedrich Wieck, January 11, 1832, he suggests that the Op. 1 was Chopin's tenth work, and even asserts that between Op. 1 and

Op. 2 (the '*La ci darem*' Variations) two years elapsed and probably twenty other works were written. It is evident then that these pieces, with the exception of Op. 2, were all written before his sixteenth year, and, though none of them is important as music, they are of great interest because of the composer's age, and because they were his first step on the ladder of fame, and so form a basis for comparison with his later writings. Although the *Variations* on a German tune, *Der Schweizerbub*, and the *G sharp minor Polonaise* are the two earliest compositions that have survived, actually the first work published was a *Polonaise* dedicated to Countess Victoire Skarbek, in 1817. In 1818 Chopin wrote two *Polonaises* for the Dowager Empress Marie of Russia, and in 1821 another in *A flat* for the birthday of Zwyny; but these are unobtainable.

Frédéric wrote in light-hearted mood to his friend Jan Bialoblocki in June 1826:

DEAR JASIA! —

Don't expect to find this letter the usual nameday compliments: all those showy feelings, exclamations, apostrophes, pathetic bits and similar rubbish, nonsense, stuff and piffle. They are good enough for heads that can find trivial phrases in the absence of friendship; but when people have a tie of eleven years of friendship, when they have counted the months together 132 times, have begun 468 weeks, 3960 days, 95,040 hours, 5,702,400 minutes, 342,144,000 seconds together, they don't need reminders, or complimentary letters, because they'll never write what they want to write. . . . [If any reader cares to check these figures he must conclude that Chopin could not have passed an examination in arithmetic] . . . I have not sent you any of my scrawls, but instead of that the waltzes of Aleksander Rembielinski [a talented pianist who was having some success, but who died young], which I think you will like. . . . If I don't send you my clavi-cembalo rubbish don't be surprised, because that's me.

Perhaps we are to understand that his 'scrawls' were for the pianoforte, and the 'rubbish' was for the new instrument.

But the humorous touches that abound in the letters do not reflect the boy's true nature. He was not happy, nor was he very well. His love for his art was too engrossing for his un-

developed body. The spirit was willing, and the desire to learn and expand prodigious; but a crash would be bound to come if he were allowed to continue using up his vitality. We could imagine from his amusing letters that everything was easy to him, that his work took nothing out of him. But to be thought funny, to be able to crack jokes and play the fool, to caricature and mimic does not necessarily mean that life glitters, that it holds no worries, that the sun is for ever shining. One has only to know some of the world's comedians – men who earn their living by amusing multitudes with their wit or their absurdities – to realize that beneath this cloak may lie a sad and forlorn heart. Frédéric would often work late into the night; at times even this was not sufficient, for he would have to get out of bed time and again to erase or add, in order to satisfy that ever-functioning mind. The other inmates of the house were at first startled by his nocturnal experiments at the keyboard, and horrified at the danger to his health: but their anxiety was of no avail. His parents quite evidently were powerless to prevent him from working; probably they thought that it was better for the boy's health to allow his brain its natural freedom. Just at this time, however, their youngest child, Emilia, whose health was poor, was ordered by the doctors to take the waters at Bad Reinertz, in Prussian Silesia, and this provided the occasion for a change of environment for Frédéric. His mother and his eldest sister Louise made up the party of four. He writes to Wilhelm Kolberg from Reinertz on August 18: –

I have been drinking whey and the local waters for two weeks, and they say that I am looking a little better, but I am said to be getting fat, and am as lazy as ever, to which you can ascribe the long lethargy of my pen. . . . In the morning, at 6 o'clock at the latest, all the patients are at the wells; then there's an atrocious band of wind players: a dozen caricatures of various types collected together; the head one, a thin bassoonist with a snuffy, spectacled nose, frightens all the ladies that are afraid of horses by playing to the freely perambulating Kur-Gäste.

He describes his walks on the near hills, how he sometimes comes down them on all-fours, and how he is forbidden to climb

to the top of a neighbouring mountain because 'the air at the very top is not good for everybody'. He is amused that the Silesian women appear to work more than the men, 'but as I don't do anything myself, it's easy for me to acquiesce in that'.

Frédéric bemoans his fate to his harmony professor, Elsner, in another letter: 'Imagine, Sir, that there is not one good piano, and all that I have seen are instruments that cause me more distress than pleasure.' He ends his letter naïvely and characteristically: 'But, before I have the pleasure of seeing you, allow me, Sir, to assure you of my highest respect.'

Whilst he was at Reinertz, Chopin heard of the death of a poor widow who had vainly expected relief from the waters, and of the sorry plight of her two orphans, who could neither pay the funeral expenses nor purchase their return tickets. Immediately he volunteered to give a concert, and not only was he able to satisfy their pressing needs by the success of his efforts, but earned the admiration of everyone by his generous gesture.

Frédéric was invited to stay at Strzyzewo, the home of his godmother (formerly the Countess Anna Skarbek, now Madame Wiesiolowska). A near neighbour of his hostess was Prince Radziwill, the same Prince who has already been mentioned in connection with Liszt's assertions as to the part he played in Frédéric's education. He had a wonderful country seat, Antonin. Chopin did not stay there on this occasion; but his talent and his agreeableness so impressed the Prince that we shall not be surprised when we find him invited for a long visit there three years later. From Strzyzewo he went for a short time to his friend Jan Bialoblocki at Sokolowo. In a letter to Jan, dated November 2, he writes:

Since Sokolowo, for really I got so fat, so lazy, that, in one word, I don't want to do anything, anything at all. Learn, my life, by these presents. That I don't go to the Lycée. Really it would be stupid to sit perforce for 6 hours a day, when both German and German-Polish doctors have told me to walk as much as possible; it would be stupid to listen to the same things twice over when one can be learning something new during this year. Meanwhile I go to Elsner for strict counterpoint, 6 hours a week; I hear Brodzinski, Bentkowski and others, on

subjects connected in any way with music. I go to bed at 9. All teas, evenings and balls are off. I drink an emetic water by Malcz's orders, and feed myself only on oatmeal *quasi* a horse.

He grumbles at the prospect of having to return to Reinertz the following year, and thinks Paris would be far better.

From this letter we learn several enlightening things about Chopin's daily life. He had to follow a strict régime for the sake of his health; he had finished with school lessons, and was accordingly working all the harder with Elsner; and he already had within him the germs of that desire to see Paris that was so greatly to influence his future. Another item of importance is gleaned from his next letter to the same friend, dated January 8, 1827:

I also send you my mazurka, of which you have heard; later perhaps you'll get another; it would be too many pleasures at once. They are already published; meanwhile I am leaving my Rondo, that I wanted to have lithographed, stifling among my papers, though it is earlier and therefore has more right to travel. It's having the same luck as I!

The *Rondo* seems to me to be the *Rondo alla Mazurka* which was published in Germany as Opus 5, but had already been published in Warsaw in 1827 without an opus number. It is dedicated to the Countess Alexandrine de Moriolles, daughter of the tutor to the son of the Grand Duke Constantine. The two *Mazurkas* I can only suggest as being the *G major* and *B flat*, which were written in 1825, and published by J. Leitgeber in Warsaw, though without a date.

The year 1827 brought forth some fresh compositions, pointing clearly to the fact that the youth had now more time to devote to his music, and also that he was developing naturally. One cannot say that any of the early works are great, but each seems to be an improvement on the last and to promise greater things to come. Julian Fontana, a lifelong friend of Chopin, unearthed some manuscripts after his death, and had them published with the consent of the family in 1855. Amongst

these were a *Polonaise* numbered Op. 71, No. 1, and the *Nocturne in E minor*, Op. 72, No. 1. These, with the *Sonata in C minor*, Op. 4 (not published until 1851), were sketched out and probably finished during 1827.

The titles of Mazurka and Polonaise show that Chopin was interesting himself in the rhythms and curious harmonies of the peasant-folk. Until his visits to Strzyzewo and Sokolowo the previous year he had known nothing of the country or its people. To hear the peasants singing and playing and watch them dancing enchanted him. But how they did these things was an enigma to him. He kept wondering who could have taught them; he would ask who wrote down their melodies or who had originally composed them. He was dumbfounded – for he knew the terrible poverty of the Polish peasants from time immemorial, and how utterly impossible it was for them ever to have been taught anything. Everywhere round him was squalor; everyone appeared half-starved, many of them drunken – they were little better than slaves. Centuries of the despotic power of their own nobles had made serfs of them, and now that Russia dominated the country entirely their future was even more hopeless. Yet with all this misery they never lost their natural gaiety, their spontaneity, their desire to make merry either by music or by dancing. No wonder the young Chopin was deeply impressed, no wonder that he became absorbed in the primitive foundations of their music. Later on we shall find that his nationalism was just as pronounced as theirs, and that he brought their Polish dance-rhythms to such a stage of perfection as to make them immortal. The seeds of his colossal love for his country, if not actually sown in the summers of 1826 and 1827, became then at least securely rooted.

There is a short letter to another boy friend, Jan Matuszynski, written towards the end of 1827, which gives a clue as to the date of composition of the '*La ci darem*' *Variations*:

DEAR JASIA! –

What has happened that we haven't met for so long? I expect you every day, and find that you don't come; just because I want to speak to you about this: As the weather is so bad now,

I should like to make a fair copy of the piano part of the variations, and I can't do it without your copy. Would you please bring it to me tomorrow, and the day afterwards you shall have both.

Your

F. F. CHOPIN.

This disproves the theory that these *Variations* were written in 1828. They were sent to Haslinger in Vienna along with the *C minor Sonata* in that year, but were not published until 1830, the *Sonata* having to wait another twenty-one years before seeing the light.

The compositions of 1828 were fewer in comparison. Chopin worked a good deal on a *Trio* for pianoforte, violin and violoncello, but did not finish it until the following year. It was published in 1833 as Op. 8, and dedicated to Prince Antoine Radziwill.

The '*La ci darem*' *Variations* were dedicated to the greatest friend of his youth, Titus Wojciechowski. When writing to inform his friend of the inscription Frédéric very prettily added: 'On the second – perhaps too boldly – I have put your name. My heart asked for it and our friendship permitted it, so don't be angry.' Another work, the *C major Rondo* for two pianofortes, was re-written during the year; Frédéric tried it over with a brother-pianist named Ernemann, and was satisfied with its sound. It had originally been conceived for two hands. Curiously enough, it was never published during the composer's lifetime, only appearing under Fontana's direction in 1855 as Op. 73.

Chopin had been spending the summer at Sanniki, Strzyzewo and Danzig with different friends, and on returning to Warsaw had a pleasant surprise. A friend of his father's, a zoology professor named Dr. Jarocki, called and asked if Frédéric might be allowed to go to Berlin with him. Nicolas Chopin was delighted, and readily gave his consent, for he had been worrying much of late about the future of his son. He was never affluent, and found himself saddled with a youth who normally should by this time have been earning something to help, but in reality was financially a hindrance. He recognized

that the best thing for Frédéric's development would be to send him abroad, for Warsaw could offer him nothing to widen his outlook and extend his knowledge. Berlin at that time was becoming important musically, and no finer opportunity could have presented itself. Frédéric's joy at the prospect of seeing Berlin and hearing its music can be imagined. He tells Titus: 'I'm writing now in a half crazy state, because I really don't know what's happening to me. I am starting to-day for Berlin.' (September 9.)

Under the auspices of the King of Prussia, Frederick William III, the University of Berlin had invited the most renowned men of science in Europe to attend a congress that was to be presided over by the famous explorer and scientist, Alexander von Humboldt. Dr. Jarocki, as an old and esteemed student of the University, was invited, and, knowing the dilemma in which Nicolas Chopin found himself, had thought that this was the occasion to help him. Frédéric looked forward to meeting all the leading musicians of Berlin through the friend and tutor of Dr. Jarocki, Professor Lichtenstein, who was the secretary of the conference. Lichtenstein had been a friend of Carl Maria von Weber, who had died in 1826, and whose music Frédéric had just learnt to love, and also knew Zelter, the conductor of the Berlin Singakademie. Frédéric hoped that Prince Radziwill would be in Berlin, and that through him he might meet Mendelssohn and Spontini. So with the most expectant joy he set out upon the road with his older companion.

The diligence took five days to make the journey, and 'on Sunday about three in the afternoon we diligence-jogged into this much-too-big town'. The travellers went direct to the Hotel Kronprinz, and that same day Chopin met Lichtenstein, who introduced him to Humboldt. But he was not destined to meet the other famous musicians. 'I have seen Spontini, Zelter and Mendelssohn, but did not speak with any of them, as I felt shy about introducing myself.' Prince Radziwill was not in Berlin, and Lichtenstein's time was fully taken up with his duties as secretary, so Frédéric had to be satisfied with listening to music, and was denied the pleasure of meeting the illustrious ones. He heard a number of operas, and Handel's *Ode on St.*

*Cecilia's Day*, which he liked best of all – 'nearer to the ideal that I have formed of great music'. Among the operas that he heard were *Cortez* (Spontini), *Il Matrimonio Segreto* (Cimarosa), *Calporteur* (Onslow), *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* (Winter) and *Der Freischütz* (Weber), which he already knew pretty well. He was not enamoured of the singers – in fact he was quite rude about the women singers in his letters, which contain as usual some amusing quips.

Of the Berlin women in general he had no opinion. 'Marylski hasn't a farthing's worth of taste if he says the Berlin women are beautiful. They dress, that's true; but it's pitiful to see the gorgeous rumpled muslins on such dowdy images.' He thought Berlin 'too widely built; double the population could fit into it easily'. His sense of the ridiculous is as much in evidence as ever: he says that he and his companion ate more than usual because 'the naturalists, and particularly the zoologists, have occupied themselves with the improvement of meat, sauces, broth and such things; so during the few days of the sessions they made great progress in eating'.

Chopin stayed fourteen days in Berlin. On the way home he and his travelling companion the Professor stayed two days at Posen as the guests of Archbishop Wolicki, '*in gratiam* for a dinner', as he puts it. Prince Radziwill, who was at that time Governor of Posen, had his family seat near by, and invited Chopin to his home, the two musicians making and talking music together. But before the travellers reached Posen an incident occurred that is the subject of one of the best-known anecdotes of Chopin's young life. Many of the stories that surround him do not bear much sifting: they are often fabrications, or, if not, have been distorted beyond the possibility of fact. A number of these stories might have been included, but, since I doubt their sincerity, I have avoided them. This one, however, rings true, and no amount of elaborate repetition can affect its naturalness.

At the small postal station of Züllichau the occupants of the diligence were told that they would have to wait some time for a fresh relay of horses. This was not pleasant news to the two Poles, who were anxious to get back to their families as quickly as possible. There was no choice of amusement but walking,

and although the village boasted the historical interest of having once been a battlefield, its landscape was unattractive, and neither the buildings nor the inhabitants provided any excitement. On their return to the waiting-house the younger traveller grew impatient, and started searching for a pianoforte. He found one that looked depressingly decrepit, but, unexpectedly finding its interior to be better than its exterior, he began to improvise. His fellow-travellers entered one by one, and soon became entranced by his playing. One of them was a fat German, who had annoyed his companions on the journey by smoking incessantly, even at night when the others were trying to sleep: but now the music proved more engrossing even than the pipe, which remained unlit in his mouth. The audience grew – the post-master himself became a listener, then his wife, and finally his two daughters. No one murmured – nothing stirred; all were absorbed in the lovely sounds that Chopin was extracting from the old instrument. Suddenly a voice pealed out: ‘Gentlemen, the horses are ready.’ Everyone jumped up, startled out of their dreams, annoyed at the disturbance of their pleasure. The next moment they were begging the young pianist to ignore the interruption and continue; but he was itching to see his beloved Warsaw, and had got up from his chair.

‘We have been here too long already, and should be nearing Posen by now,’ said he, looking at his watch.

‘Never mind,’ said the post-master, ‘go on playing, and I myself will provide courier horses for you.’

As the two pretty daughters joined their father in his entreaties, the young artist sat down again. He was ever the slave of a pretty face, although far too shy to compliment the owner of it. At the finish of his improvisation on a Polish air (afterwards re-modelled and published as Op. 13, *Grand Fantasia on Polish Airs*, with orchestral accompaniment) the post-master, as host, offered wine to his unexpected guests. They all cordially drank to the young Pole – ‘the darling of Polyhymnia’ was the toast – and ecstatically thanked him. One of the audience, probably a local musician and singer of the church, was almost overcome with emotion. ‘I am old now,’ he said, ‘but I was trained to play the piano also, and I know

what to enjoy and how to admire fine playing. I can only say that if Mozart had heard you he would have seized you by the hand and shouted "Bravo!"' Frédéric played a little Mazurka of his own as an encore – his thank-offering – and then the party broke up. The post-master carried the youth to the diligence, while his wife and daughters packed up wine and food for the journey.

Frédéric never forgot this incident. Often he recalled to mind the genuine pleasure that he had given to those simple folk. Such moments as these filled him with joy. His pianistic art was never for the multitude; his greatest happiness was to feel that he was reaching the souls of an intimate few, and to know that he was giving them solace. We shall find throughout his life how much he enjoyed privacy, how much he loathed publicity – how the satisfying of a few meant more to him than the swaying of a vast audience.

## CHAPTER V

### VIENNA

1828-1829

THERE was one pleasant surprise awaiting Frédéric soon after his return home. His father and mother had for some time realized that their son needed seclusion for his work, that his nature was of the kind which demanded solitude for the purposes of concentration; and, though their home was a small one, they determined that he should have his own workroom. It meant a sacrifice on their part, but they were never selfish regarding their children, and the gain to their son seemed well worth their own deprivation.

This independence was what Frédéric had longed for, not only because of his work, for naturally his thoughts were now far more likely not to be disturbed, but because he felt that he could now entertain his own particular friends, could talk and discuss the matters which were of interest at the moment. It was not only his music that was developing. The trip to Berlin had awakened in him a desire to know much more about life in general. We can see from the few quoted extracts from his letters that he had an observing eye; that the habits and manners of his fellow-beings were vitally interesting to him; that he was attracted far more by what he saw than by the doings of the scientists; that he was far more desirous of hearing music than of attempting to show off his own prowess; in short that he was receptive, not assertive. His fastidiousness had not been satisfied by the performances he had heard in Berlin, nor was he much impressed with the music except *Der Freischütz* and Handel's *Ode to St. Cecilia*. Without doubt, he was growing up, emerging from his adolescence, expanding into manhood. He had been very much of a boy, with his pranks and his practical jokes, but his period of youth had been short. By his nineteenth year he had forsaken his timidity and had become almost self-reliant.

We have evidence of the results of his new environment, and

of the first finished work emanating from it, in a letter to Titus Wojciechowski, December 27, 1828.

The score of the *Rondo à la Krakowiak* is finished. The introduction is original; more so than I myself even in a beige suit. But the Trio [Op. 8] is not yet finished. There's a room upstairs which is to be at my service, steps have been made to it from the wardrobe room. I am to have an old piano there, and an old bureau, and it's to be my den.

In a postscript he informs his friend that he re-wrote the *C major Rondo for Two Pianofortes* [Op. 73] on September 9. The *Krakowiak* is the best orchestrated of the concerted pieces of Chopin, and deserves occasional performances for this reason alone.

The year 1828 was a fairly productive one for the young composer, for it is obvious that the following works were made ready for publication: *Rondo for Two Pianofortes*, Op. 73; *Sonata in C minor*, Op. 4; *Fantasia on Polish Airs*, Op. 13; *Krakowiak for Piano-forte and Orchestra*, Op. 14; and possibly the *Polonaise in B flat*, Op. 71, No. 2. In the first half of 1829 the following compositions were conceived: *Valse in B minor*, Op. 69, No. 2; *Valse in E major*, published without opus number by Gebethner and Wolff in 1872; the *Marche Funèbre*, Op. 72, No. 2; *Polonaise in F minor*, Op. 71, No. 3, and possibly a *Mazurka in D major*, which was published in two forms, both poor, in 1851. None of these works is of great merit, though they are not without charm, and each has a distinct flavour of the composer's original mind. Chopin was away travelling for more than two months, and this may account for the apparent inactivity.

Before writing about the young pianist's trip to Vienna (I say pianist here with a meaning, for the object of the journey was to see what prospects there were for him to earn a living by his playing), the visit to Warsaw of two distinguished musicians must be mentioned. Johann Nepomuk Hummel and Niccoló Paganini both gave concerts in the Polish capital. Hummel was a virtuoso of the highest class in his day, and a prolific composer of music of all types, though with a decided preference for the pianoforte. His works, with the exception of the *Rondo Favori* in

F minor, have long ceased to appear on concert programmes; but until the end of the nineteenth century his pianoforte compositions were frequently used by pedagogues for training pupils' fingers. Evidently he had a charming disposition and he was renowned for his kindness and encouragement to young musicians. Chopin met his older colleague in Warsaw, and they were mutually attracted. During Frédéric's second visit to Vienna at the close of 1830, Hummel introduced him to many of his friends, and Chopin tells his parents that 'Old Hummel was kindness itself'. In spite of the tremendous difference both in their work and in their attitude towards the pianoforte, the younger man had the greatest admiration and respect for the older man's compositions, and one can notice the influence of Hummel in many technical passages in Chopin's earlier works. The other great influence in these early compositions was John Field, the Irish composer who lived in St. Petersburg, and who will be discussed later.

Paganini was probably too much of the showman to excite any hero-worship in the delicate and sensitive Pole, but that Chopin admired his playing enormously is seen from a sentence in a letter from Vienna to his parents in December 1830. He was praising a violinist named Slawik, whom he describes as 'a great violinist, of real genius', that he 'liked him, after Paganini, better than anyone'. There is no available information about Paganini's Warsaw concerts, which perhaps is a pity, for it would be illuminating to know the reaction of the fastidious pianist to this extraordinary player. Paganini was at that time sweeping Europe before him, though he appears to have had a set-back in Prague (Chopin writes of his being 'grilled' there), and the magnetism of his playing was wielding a marked influence on many contemporary musicians. The effect of his influence on another man of genius, Liszt, was very noticeable, as can be seen from the latter's transcriptions.

Chopin's trip to Berlin had whetted his appetite to see more of the world. He was restless and unhappy. He felt he must go away. Where to? Vienna had always lured him – would it be possible? At last he heard that three of his friends were going, and he begged his father to allow him to accompany them. His father managed to scrape together a little money, and about the

end of the second week in July the four set forth. Haslinger, the Viennese publisher, had been sent three or four manuscripts, but the optimistic young composer had received no hopeful answer from him. There was only one mode of procedure – to see him and inquire the reason, and to show the works off properly by playing them himself.

This was one cause for his impatience to visit Vienna. But something else was troubling him. He was in love. Silently, secretly, he had borne these agitated feelings, at one time happy beyond measure, at another disconsolate almost to despair. His first admission of the gnawing at his heart was in a letter written in the following October to his nearest friend, Titus, but in this letter he speaks of having hidden his feelings for ‘half a year’. After these months of solitude in his heart, not daring to speak to his ‘ideal’, hardly courageous enough to look at her, he felt he could bear the strain no longer.

The four young men journeyed by way of Cracow, the old capital of Poland, full of historical associations and fine buildings. The effect of the ancient city on these eager travellers who so intensely loved their country must have been overpowering. Here they stayed a week, leaving for Vienna on the 24th in a peasant’s cart. Their first stopping-place was to be Ojców, not in the town, but at a small house about six miles out which was popular with tourists. Unfortunately the driver missed the way and drove into the Pradnik, a little stream. The party wandered about in the dark, chiefly among rocks and stones, and were finally found by two peasants late in the evening. In the darkness they often stumbled over the half-hidden rocks, sometimes stepping into deep water. When they eventually reached the house, the three companions undressed and dried their clothes in front of the fire, but Frédéric, as usual, was slow in making up his mind. When he saw the wife of the innkeeper go to fetch some bedding he followed, and spying some large woollen night-caps asked if he might buy one. He tore it in two, wrapped his feet in each half and tied the strings round to save himself catching a chill. Soon, beds were made up on the floor for them all, and with wine and a good fire, they were quickly fast asleep.

Vienna greeted the four tourists on the evening of July 31. They were gay and happy, and began their sightseeing at once. One of the first visits Chopin made was to Haslinger, to whom he had a letter from Elsner. His curiosity was soon appeased, for the over-polite publisher told him at once that the '*La ci darem*' *Variations* would probably be appearing in a week's time. 'I didn't expect that,' he writes to his parents. Haslinger also advised him to play in public, probably with an eye to selling the *Variations* more readily. Chopin was in no mood for playing, not having seen a pianoforte for a good two weeks, but the various people he met – Schuppanzigh the violinist, a great friend of Beethoven, Count Gallenberg, the director of the Kärnthnerthor Theatre and husband of Beethoven's 'immortal beloved', Countess Giulia Guicciardi, Blahetka, a journalist, whose daughter was a popular pianist, and the two pianoforte manufacturers, Graff and Stein – all pleaded with him, and at last his diffidence was overcome. Perhaps he was influenced mostly by the conductor Würfel, who knew him in Warsaw, and who told him that it would be a sin not to show off his talent in public, a slight on his parents, on his teachers and on his country. Würfel promised to arrange everything for him – he had only to decide which of the two makes of pianoforte he preferred. A Graff was decided on, and the advertisement of the concert appeared the following day. At the end of the letter to his parents in which he informs them of his decision he exclaims: 'I hope the Lord will help me – Don't worry!'

Here is the shy pianist already hesitating about appearing in public. This dislike for concert-playing was to increase, not diminish, even when he was acclaimed as one of the greatest of all pianists, and this, from our point of view, is one of the unfortunate things about his life; for had he been able to develop a liking for the public exposition of his art, he might have created a tradition of pianoforte-playing which would have prevented the advent of the hard-hitters who followed Liszt. Europe has been a long time recovering from the effects of the thumpers of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The next letter to his parents, August 12, tells them all about the concert. Concerts in those days did not need the lengthy preparation they do nowadays. Chopin took eight days to de-

cide upon giving one and three days to prepare it. The programme announced was:

Overture to Prometheus	. Beethoven.
Variations (La ci darem)	. Chopin.
Arias (Mlle Veltheim)	. Rossini and Vaccaji.
Krakowiak (Rondo)	. Chopin.

The singer had to sing again, and a short ballet finished the programme. Chopin's manuscript was neither correct nor legible, and the orchestra made such difficulties at the rehearsal (a not very uncommon thing in past years) that the composer elected to play a free *Fantasia* on a chosen theme, instead of risking a bad performance of the *Rondo*.

His account of the concert makes good reading in these times. 'As soon as I appeared on the stage, the bravos began; after each variation the applause was so loud that I couldn't hear the orchestra's *tutti*. When I finished, they clapped so much that I had to come out and bow a second time.' What would a modern pianist of even mediocre attainments think of an audience who only brought him back once? What would the present-day orchestras think if the audiences applauded during their *tutti*?

The press was mainly enthusiastic; the concert promoter, Count Gallenberg, was pleased with both Chopin's playing and his compositions. The improvisations were greeted with much applause, and well they might be, for even as a young and inexperienced man his efforts in this direction must have been extraordinary. I doubt whether any pianist, even Liszt, has ever improvised so marvellously, so musically and so poetically. The themes chosen were one from Boieldieu's opera *La Dame blanche*, and a popular drinking-song, *Chmiel*, which latter must have emanated from Chopin himself or from his three friends, who were assigned to different positions in the hall so as to overhear remarks, and who were instructed not to start the bravos themselves. Hube, one of the three musketeers, heard one lady say 'What a pity the boy is so badly turned out!' Chopin's retort to this was 'If that is all the fault anybody found then I needn't worry!'

Chopin, however, despite the favourable Press criticisms,

was upset that so many among the audience thought his playing too soft, too delicate 'for people used to the piano-pounding of the artists here'; but he preferred this to being told that he played too loudly. He had decided that 'interior house-painting' would be his future vocation if the papers wrote against him - 'it's easy to smear a brush across paper. . . . To-day I am wiser and more experienced by about four years.' His humour had not deserted him, for he concludes his letter: 'Ah! You must have been surprised that my last letter was sealed with - "Madiera". I was so distracted that I took the seal nearest to my hand, which was the waiter's, and sealed my letter in a hurry.'

A second concert was arranged for the 18th, a week later. In the meantime Chopin made the acquaintance of a number of the leading musicians, including Carl Czerny, who was rather patronizing, and Gyrowetz, whose concerto Frédéric had played on his first public appearance when he was 8 years old. The 'local nobility' liked him also, and he was radiantly happy when he met Count Moritz Lichnowski, a great friend and patron of Beethoven.

At the second concert Chopin repeated the *Variations*, and, through the kind help of a brother Pole, Nidecki, who had corrected the parts, was able to include the *Krakowiak*. The rest of the programme consisted of an *Overture* of Lindpaintner, and a *Polonaise* for solo violin by Mayseder, which was played by a young violinist named Joseph Khayl. The concert-giver was more pleased with his second effort and did not hesitate to tell his parents of his satisfaction. He tells them of the 'bravos', the compliments of the different musicians, the overheard sayings of members of the audience. 'I have captured both the learned and the emotional folk. . . . I have played twice, and the second success was better than the first; it goes *crescendo*; that's what I like.' These were amongst the many short phrases in his exclamatory letter.

Frédéric was certainly in the highest of spirits after his two concerts, and was elated with his success both as pianist and as composer. As he left Vienna before most of the criticisms appeared, we have nothing in his letters to Warsaw which enlightens us as to his reaction to the opinions of others.

On the 12th September he wrote a very lengthy letter to Titus in which he told his friend everything, perhaps even more vividly than to his parents. After describing the more pleasurable moments of the journey, and saying how Vienna 'overwhelmed, stupefied and hallucinated' him, he proceeds to explain how he was cajoled into playing. What undoubtedly convinced Chopin that he had to accede to the wishes of the various musicians there was Haslinger's suggestion to Count Gallenberg that he was a coward and was afraid to appear. He then speaks of the kind reception he had from most of the prominent musicians, and mentions the frightful muddle the orchestra made of his *Krakowiak*. 'All the confusion was caused by pauses written differently at the top and the bottom of the score, although I explained that only the top numbers count.' He admits it was 'partly' his own fault, but hints that the players were annoyed at his inaccuracies. He goes on: 'Who knows whether the risk [of improvising] and my bad temper were not just the goad that stirred me up to do my best in the evening.' It was still the custom to play with music, even for composer-pianists, for he had 'a rouged-up partner to turn the leaves, who boasted to me that he had turned over for Moscheles, Hummel, Herz, etc.'. After the success of the first concert he says he was glad that he gave another one 'because no one could say I had played once and run away'.

Frédéric apparently was attracted by Leopoldina Blahetka, whom he calls 'the first pianist of Vienna. She must like me (*nota bene* she is not 20 yet; living at home; a clever and even pretty girl); she gave me her own compositions with an autograph inscription, for a keepsake'. Was he trying to forget his 'ideal' in Warsaw, or was he just succumbing to the compliments of a pretty and clever girl? We are not left long in doubt, for Miss Blahetka is quickly out of his mind, and Constantia cannot be forgotten for years.

Chopin did not seem enamoured with Carl Czerny as a musician: 'I have made close friends with Czerny; we often played together on two pianofortes at his house. He's a good fellow but nothing more.' In an earlier letter Frédéric said 'Czerny is more sensitive than any of his compositions'. On the other hand he was greatly impressed with August Klengel's forty-eight

fugues, which he maintained were a continuation of Bach's. He met Klengel at Prague on his homeward journey. 'He plays well, but I should have liked him to play better.'

There can be no doubt that Chopin's originality both as pianist and composer had pleased most of the important Viennese musicians, amongst whom were Franz Lachner, a fine teacher and one-time friend of Schubert (who had tragically died the year before); Conradin Kreutzer, an eminent conductor and composer; Ignaz Schuppanzigh, excellent violinist and leader of a string quartet which bore his name; Adalbert Gyrowetz, of whom we have already heard; Ritter von Seyfried, a conductor and editor of Albrechtsberger and Beethoven; Joseph Mayseder, the leading Viennese violinist, and many others. They all warmly welcomed this elegant and sensitive young musician whose gifts were so rare, yet who was so entirely simple and without conceit. No wonder that Chopin felt the sincerity of their clamourings for his return, and that directly he arrived in Warsaw again he should have wished to revisit the friendly city which was willing to receive him with open arms.

The Viennese Press was enthusiastic, but hardly equalled the praises of the musicians. The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* which appeared on November 18 speaks of him as 'a master of the first rank, with his exquisite delicacy of touch, indescribable finger dexterity, and the deep feeling shown by his command of shading. His interpretations and his compositions both bear the stamp of genius, and reveal a virtuoso liberally endowed by nature who appears on the horizon like a most brilliant meteor'. The *Wiener Theaterzeitung* admired the modesty of his playing and his compositions, and the artist's desire to entertain his audience with music as music, not to shine as a virtuoso. The critic said that 'his touch, although neat and sure, had little brilliance comparable with the virtuosos who wish to conquer with their first few bars, but his playing was like conversing amongst clever people'. He spoke of a noticeable defect in not indicating by accent the beginning of each musical phrase, and favourably compared Chopin's improvisational gifts with the great masters Beethoven and Hummel.

After the second concert the same paper, probably the same critic, admits the justification of the previous opinions. 'This is

a young man who goes his own road, on which he knows how to please, although his style differs widely from all other virtuosos. His predominating gift is his desire to make good music, not his desire to please.' Another paper, the *Wiener Zeitschrift für Kunst*, says of the *Krakowiak*, after the second concert: 'It is written throughout in chromatic style, is rarely of genius; but one is forced to admire the thoughtfulness and depth of his artistry. On the whole, however, the work lacks variety.' The critic goes on to suggest that a longer stay in Vienna might be profitable to the pianist's touch and to a higher perfection of ensemble playing with orchestra.

Some of the audience, amongst them Count Moritz Lichnowski, thought Chopin's tone too feeble. The Count offered his own instrument for the second concert, politely suggesting that his pianoforte had a fuller tone, but Chopin rejected the offer. 'This is my manner of playing, which gives the ladies so much pleasure.' We know that the playing of Chopin, like his compositions, has always had an immediate appeal for the feminine sex, and that this fact has often reacted against him. But though we shall find exclamations and asides of that nature during the course of the biography, they usually emanate from disappointed or disgruntled colleagues. The ultra-refinement of his music, the delicacy of nuance, and the exquisite sensitiveness with which his works abound, are qualities which may make a quicker appeal to women; but this does not mean that the stronger and less pliable creature, man, cannot be touched by tenderness. The frailty of Chopin himself and the supreme intimacy of both his piano-playing and his writings laid him open to unfriendly taunts and gibes, which are occasionally heard even to this day: yet he suffered less from the jealousy of his colleagues than almost any other musician, and has had fewer enemies than any other great composer.

The return journey to Warsaw was made via Prague, Tep-litz, Dresden and Breslau. Chopin was embraced on leaving by many of his newly-made friends, and promised to come back. He departed by *Eilwagen*. Perhaps he was happy at that moment, for he still had the young man's enthusiasm for seeing the world; but he must have regretted the opportunities of hearing fine music that he was leaving behind. He had heard several

operatic performances, including *La Dame blanche* of Boieldieu, *La Cenerentola* of Rossini, *Il Crociato in Egitto* of Meyerbeer, and *Mosè in Egitto* of Rossini; he had also been to two violin recitals by Mayseder, and had visited the picture galleries and museums. All these things were vitally necessary to his development. He missed also the intercourse with the aristocratic families, with whom he was always a favourite. He was intelligent enough to know what he was leaving, and had already determined to hurry back at the first possible moment.

At Prague, whither the travellers went as quickly as was possible in those days, taking from 9 p.m. on the 19th until noon on the 21st, Frédéric's first visit was to the cathedral. He thought the city beautiful, 'large, ancient and once opulent'. He carried a letter of introduction to Waclaw Hauke, the librarian of the National Museum, and a renowned scientist. Hauke requested Chopin and his two friends (for one of the party, Hube, had stayed on in Vienna) to sign the visitors' book. 'So each of us had to think of something to say; one in verse, the other in prose. Szwejkowski wrote a long speech. What was a musician to do here? Luckily Maciejowski hit on the idea of writing a four-verse Mazurka, so I added the music and inscribed myself together with my poet, as originally as possible. Hauke was pleased; it was a *Mazur* for him.'

Another introductory letter was to Frederick Pixis, the director of the Prague Conservatorium, and also a violinist of ability. It was he who made Chopin acquainted with Klengel, and who tried in vain to induce him to give a concert whilst in Prague. Frédéric was not eager to do so, particularly after hearing of the cold reception that Paganini had had there.

On the second day Frédéric, half-dressed, blundered into the wrong room in the hotel. An astonished voice told him in German of his mistake. 'Guten Morgen!' 'Bitte um Verzeihung!' And he fled.

The stay at Teplitz occupied one whole day and two nights. He went on the first evening with a Polish friend called Lempicki to dinner with the 'great, almost sovereign family' of Prince Clary. A 'small but choice gathering' had been invited to meet him. After the meal the Princess, mother of his host, asked him 'to be pleased to sit down to the pianoforte'. He

acceded, thereupon asking the company 'to be pleased' to give him a theme. A melody from Rossini's *Moses in Egypt* was chosen, to which the young guest added his impromptu variations and arabesques. He had to play four times, and the young princesses were loth to let him stop. A cordial invitation was extended for the following evening, but this was not accepted.

In Dresden the travellers were fortunate enough to find that there was a representation of the first part of Goethe's *Faust* at the *National-Theater*, with the great actor Carl Devrient playing Faust. Chopin had already seen Devrient in Berlin, and was naturally excited at the prospect of renewing acquaintance with his acting, especially in such a rôle. The occasion was in celebration of the eightieth birthday of the great German poet. Frédéric had to stand outside the theatre from 4.30, and the play lasted from 6 till 11. 'It's terrible phantasy, but a great one. Between the acts they played selections from Spohr's opera of the same name.'

Dresden had a special attraction for Chopin; for his idol Weber had been *Kapellmeister* at the Opera there. Weber had been dead for three years, and had been succeeded by an Italian, Francesco Morlacchi, to whom Klengel had given Chopin a letter. Klengel was anxious that Morlacchi should introduce Chopin to an old pupil of his, a Miss Pechwell, whom he considered the best pianist in Dresden. That Chopin knew of the intrigue against Weber in which the Italian had been involved may be deduced from the following few words with which he finishes a letter to his parents: 'To-morrow morning I expect Morlacchi; I am to go with him to Miss Pechwell. He comes to me, not I to him! Ha! Ha! Ha!'

Breslau is not mentioned in any of the letters, so we must presume that nothing of importance happened there. The party arrived back in Warsaw about the beginning of the second week in September. Chopin had been away from his home for roughly two months. He had left it more or less unknown outside the precincts of Warsaw and his own intimate circle: he returned quite a young man of the world, with the halo of a great musical city's acclamation. His receptive powers were extraordinary, his quick eyes and alert mind had seen and taken in many new and wonderful beauties. He can no longer be considered a boy.

## CHAPTER VI

### TITUS AND THE 'IDEAL'

1829-1830

KARASOWSKI is not in agreement at all with the description given by Liszt of Chopin's appearance as a youth. The redoubtable Hungarian was born one year later than Chopin, and the two did not meet until 1831; so that what Liszt has to say about the younger Chopin can only be hearsay. In his book he devotes to a picture of Chopin several pages that are extracts from '*Lucrezia Floriani*', a novel by George Sand in which the three chief characters are supposed to represent Chopin (Prince Karol), Liszt (Count Salvator Albani), and George Sand herself (Lucrezia):

Gentle, sensitive and very lovely, he united at the age of fifteen the charms of adolescence with the gravity of maturer years. He was delicate in both body and mind. Through lack of muscular development he retained a peculiar beauty and an exceptional physiognomy, which had, so to speak, neither age nor sex. . . . He was more like the ideal creations with which the poetry of mediæval times adorned Christian temples; a lovely angel with a form as pure and slight as that of a young Olympian god, with a face like that of a noble woman filled with a divine sorrow, and to crown all, an expression both tender and severe, both chaste and impassioned.

Nothing could be further from the truth than these far-fetched utterances. George Sand had undeniable gifts and indomitable energy, but Balzac was right when he told her that she could never portray a character. The first part of the description may bear some resemblance to the hot-house youth, but his face could never have been angelic, nor his figure like that of an Olympian god, neither would he ever have won a prize for good looks.

Chopin was of small build, with thin legs and slight chest, and without any muscular development at all. His face was

finely chiselled, the nose large and the forehead high; he had thin lips and a melancholy expression. That he must have been wiry can be seen from the excellent way he stood up to the fatiguing diligence journeys. Travelling one hundred years ago was not an easy matter: yet after days on end of sitting and jogging he was able to see picture-galleries and museums, admire cathedrals and castles, pay visits, listen to complete operas, see several plays, and give two exhausting concerts as well. He does not appear to have been weaker than his companions. Few of his early letters contain any reference to the state of his health, which must mean that it showed no extraordinary symptoms; and if he were nineteen years old to-day, with the advantages of games and of modern methods of physical development, he might never have contracted the devastating disease that killed him. Karasowski emphatically affirms that he was told by Chopin's old schoolfellow Wilhelm Kolberg that Chopin was only ill once before manhood, and that even this illness was only a slight chill. This may be believed. There was tuberculosis in the family; the youngest child died from it in 1827, and the father died from a chest complaint, though at the advanced age of 73. The tendency to a weak chest caused his mother and sisters to mollycoddle Frédéric, and continually remind him to 'wrap up carefully in damp weather' – not the most healthy mode of upbringing. Another curious trait was his intense dislike of smoking: he could not bear either to smoke himself or to be surrounded by the smoke of others.

We can conclude that he was a little more frail than the normal, that he lived entirely on his nerves, that he worked too hard and took too little exercise; and that whereas a robust nature would have counteracted these disabilities, his morbid love of melancholy intensified them. In some letters written during the early summer of 1831 to his parents, he pointedly mentions his good health – probably as a sop to them – and tells how a friend from Warsaw was astonished that he had become such a 'sturdy fellow'. No, it was not his health that was pulling him down during his early twenties: it was worry and unhappiness. Had he been vital and energetic, his love of solitude, which bred moroseness, would not have dominated his existence. As it was, he allowed himself to become the prey of his

moods – the blackest of them generally the result of misunderstanding, and of the perpetual thought that no one loved him.

At this period, in fact, Frédéric seems to have passed through a phase, not uncommon at his age, of misunderstanding everything and everybody. In support of this claim, let us examine some of his letters to Titus, the only one of his friends in whom he confided. At first, on reading these letters, one has a feeling of revulsion; the thought passes across one's mind that perhaps they are unhealthy, perverted – that this was no ordinary young men's friendship. But this thought changes as one pictures the sentimental attachments that did exist a few generations ago, particularly among the Saxon and Slavonic races; one does not so easily identify the Latins with such romantic friendships, but one does remember vividly some almost fantastic episodes in the literature of that period. Such a friendship was this of Frédéric and Titus. I wish that some letters from Titus had been preserved, for they would enlighten us as to whether he wrote in the same vein, and would help to clear up the mystery.

The earlier letters of Frédéric were freer from such expressions as 'love' and 'kisses'; but after his return from his first visit to Vienna they steadily grew more affectionate, until he and Titus left later for Vienna together. He began by addressing his friend as 'Dear'; this developed into 'Dearest', and soon into 'My dearest Life'. But that is not all. As early as December 27, 1828, he writes:

You don't like to be kissed. But let me do it to-day.

*September 12, 1829:* I kiss you heartily, right on the lips; may I?

*October 3, 1829:* Forgive me for sending you the waltz [Op. 70, No. 3]; perhaps it will make you angry with me, but really I did it to give you pleasure, for I do love you desperately.

*October 20, 1829:* I embrace you heartily; people usually end their letters that way without thinking what they write; but believe me that I do mean what I write, because I love you.

*November 14, 1829:* I received your last letter in which you

send me a kiss . . . my life, you are too kind; and believe me, I am nearly always with you; I will never desert you, I shall be till death your most affectionate. . . .

*March 27, 1830:* My dearest Life! I have never missed you as I do now; I have no one to pour things out to, I have not you. One look from you after each concert would be more to me than all the praises of the journalists, of the Elsners, the Kurpinskis, Solivas, and so on.

*April 10, 1830:* I'll go out with him [Celinski]; perhaps I may see someone who will remind me of you; you are the only person I love.

*May 15, 1830:* No; you don't know how much I love you, I can't show it to you in any way, and I have wished for so long that you could know. Ah, what would I not give, just to press your hand, you can't guess – half of my wretched life.

*June 5, 1830:* What a pity that I can't post myself to you instead of this letter. Perhaps you would object; but I want you, and I expect you clean-shaven.

*September 4, 1830:* I am going to wash now; don't kiss me, I'm not washed yet. You? If I were smeared with the oils of Byzantium you would not kiss me unless I forced you to it by magnetism. There's some kind of power in nature. To-day you will dream of kissing me! I have got to pay you out for the horrible dream you gave me last night.

Could any woman write to her lover more longingly, more intimately, more passionately? Even the most steel-hearted woman-hater might have softened under such an onslaught. But no ordinary man can welcome such tokens of affection or submissive protestations from another of his sex. What was Titus's reaction? Apparently not what Frédéric was wishing for, judging by the little grumbles and upbraidings with which he gently admonishes his friend for his seeming coldness. All the letters to Titus of this period unmistakably bear the stamp of femininity; and though Frédéric grew out of the obviously transitory phase, and never again pleaded his cause in the same way in subse-

quent letters, he remained a feminine type of man throughout his life. Only in one characteristic can he be dubbed masculine – his keenness in demanding as much as possible for his compositions from the publishers. This is not an exclusively masculine trait, for a number of women make good business-men in these days; but at least in this one particular he could stick up for himself and not be the subservient one. In no other relationship did he succeed in being the dominant partner: someone always had to give him the lead.

I think that Chopin was fortunate in having Titus for his friend; a less masculine type might have been peculiarly harmful. Frédéric possessed an over-abundance of sensitiveness, and a high percentage of the qualities that are popularly accredited to the 'artistic temperament'; he did not need the company or the solace of a sentimental friend to develop these. Had Titus been his closest companion in Paris, instead of living on his estate in Poland, Frédéric would probably have acquired much more self-assurance, and have been better able to pursue his career as a concert pianist. His nature required the faith and encouragement of a friend; it could not thrive on the plaudits of an audience, or the empty prattle of salons where society ladies generally show off their lack of knowledge by the glibness of their tongues and the insincerity of their smiles.

Another reason can be put forward for these outbursts of affection in Frédéric's letters to Titus. At the beginning of 1829 he imagined himself in love with a young singing student at the Warsaw Conservatorium, Constantia Gladkowska. Instead of declaring his love like an ordinary mortal, he gloried in its secrecy, filling his soul with false imaginings, one moment in ecstasy, the next in despair. For a long time he even refused to meet her, fearing possibly that he might be disappointed by closer acquaintance, or, on the other hand, that she might ignore him. His lack of self-confidence must have been to blame, for he was never over-burdened with conceit; but there can be no doubt that most of his pleasure was derived from the bottling up of his emotions. He was quickly degenerating into a chronic state of morbidity. He would not allow himself to be happy, yet he was disgruntled over the happiness of his friends and acquaintances. He was at that difficult and dangerous stage in the life

of an emotional young man when the craving for sympathy, for affection, for soul-satisfaction has to be assuaged. Even the sharing of thoughts in the company of a kindred spirit would have afforded sufficient solace. Where could he find peace? To whom could he turn for consolation, for advice, for help and encouragement? Only to Titus, and he was forty miles away – quite a journey in those pre-mechanical days. So Frédéric poured out his love in these letters, firmly assured that Titus alone was capable of understanding the misery and torment of his heart. From a letter written on October 3, 1829, it is evident that his state of mind had almost reached breaking-point. In this letter he first mentions his love for Constantia:

If you want to know what I intend to do with myself this winter, learn that I shall not stay in Warsaw; but where circumstances will lead me, I don't know. It is true that Prince Radziwill, or rather she, who is very amiable, has invited me to Berlin, even offering me quarters in their own palace; but what of that, when I must go on where I have begun, especially as I promised to return to Vienna. . . . I am sure you will see that I must go back to Vienna; but it is not for Panna Blahetka, of whom I think I wrote to you. She is young, pretty and a pianist; but I, perhaps unfortunately, already have my own ideal, which I have served faithfully, though silently, for half a year; of which I dream, to thoughts of which the *adagio* of my concerto belongs, and which this morning inspired the little waltz I am sending you. Attention to one point here: no one knows about this but you. [The *Waltz* is the *D flat*, Op. 70, No. 3, the *Concerto* that in *F minor*.]

The secret was out – Frédéric could not contain it any longer. And for once he seemed resolute. He had decided to leave Warsaw, giving the reasons later in the same letter:

You wouldn't believe how dreary I find Warsaw now; if it weren't for the family making it a little more cheerful, I shouldn't stay. But how dismal it is to have no one to go to in the morning to share one's griefs and joys; how hateful when something weighs on you and there's nowhere to lay it down. You know to what I refer. I often tell to my pianoforte what I want to tell to you.

But Frédéric was not able to leave Warsaw for thirteen months – months of agony and solitude. There can be no doubt that the year and a half that elapsed between the dawn of his infatuation and his departure from Warsaw saw the beginning of his decline in health, and the birth of that moroseness and love for solitude which altered his whole nature and were to be so often the despair of his friends. Was Constantia vital to his artistic development? Was she the ‘ideal’ of his life, the fountain-spring of his inspirations – or was she only the imaginative necessity of his mind, which required, like that of the poet, aspiration for the unattainable? I am strongly inclined to the latter view.

Nicolas Chopin was anxious that his son should go to Berlin, but Frédéric thought otherwise. He had been much more impressed by Vienna, and by the musicians he had met there. He felt that their praises had been sincere, and that possibly he could become their colleague. Also Haslinger, his first publisher, was full of promises and fine words, and Frédéric thought that he really might get all his works published. On the way to Vienna he could visit Dresden and Prague, this time giving concerts. He would leave at the end of the month, so he tells Titus on October 3. Seventeen days later he writes:

I start at 7 this evening by diligence for the Wiesolowskis’ in the province of Posen. . . . The reason of my journey is that Radziwill will be on his estate beyond Kalisz. You see, there were all sorts of beautiful offers about my going to Berlin and living in his palace; very amusing; but I don’t see any advantage in it, even if it could come off, which I doubt.

His father was inclined to believe the ‘*belles paroles*’ of the Prince, perhaps hoping for the financial assistance which Liszt wrongly maintained did exist; but Frédéric would have none of it. However, the father wished him to accept this invitation, ‘and that is why I have to go’, he adds.

He stayed at Antonin, the house of the Radziwills, for a week, and enjoyed himself tremendously.

So far as my temporary personal pleasure went, I would have stopped there till they turned me out; but my affairs, and

particularly my unfinished concerto [the *E minor*], which is waiting impatiently for the completion of its finale, spurred me on to abandon that paradise. There were two Eves in it: young princesses, very kind and friendly, musical, sensitive creatures. The old princess, too, knows that it is not birth which makes a person, and her behaviour so draws one to her that it is impossible not to love her.

During his week's stay there he wrote his *Alla Polacca* for Pianoforte and Violoncello, Op. 3. 'There is nothing in it but glitter; a salon piece, for ladies; you see, I wanted Princess Wanda to learn it.' Fickleness of heart, of which George Sand was to accuse him later in his life, manifested itself for a brief moment here. Princess Wanda was seventeen years old and very beautiful, and he delighted in guiding her pretty fingers and placing them properly on the keys. He found her musical, and had not to tell her '*crescendo* here, *piano* there; now quicker, now slower, and so on'. To Princess Eliza he felt he must present his *Polonaise in F minor*, Op. 71, No. 3 – she was so 'captivated' with it, but he had to beg Titus to send him his copy, for 'I don't want to write it out from memory, because perhaps I might get it down wrong'. This same princess drew two pictures of Frédéric in her album, and according to the sitter produced good likenesses. Titus had asked for a portrait, and Frédéric promised him one 'if I could steal one from Princess Eliza'. Evidently the young musician's visit was a success, for the Radziwills asked him once more to go to Berlin in the following May. He must this time have entertained the idea of accepting, for he wrote to Titus that there was now nothing to prevent him spending the winter in Vienna, evidently thinking that success in Vienna would pave the way for concerts in Berlin. He decided once more to leave Warsaw, planning to go to Vienna in December, after his father's name-day on the 6th: but he still had to wait a year before the actual departure.

On his return from Antonin he immediately began to work on the Finale of the *E minor Concerto*, at the same time sketching out some of the *Études*, Op. 10, and even finishing one or two of them. Occasionally he went to the house of the pianist Kessler, to whom is dedicated the German edition of the *Twenty-four Preludes*, and took part in performances of chamber-music.

Nothing was rehearsed, the players deciding amongst themselves the various works and combinations. Frédéric mentions the *C sharp minor Violin Concerto* of Ries, arranged as a string quartet, the *E major Pianoforte Trio* of Hummel, the *Octet* of Spohr, which he thought a wonderful work, the *B flat Trio* of Beethoven, Op. 97 – 'I haven't heard anything so great for a long time; Beethoven snaps his fingers at the whole world' – and a Quartet by Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, which was most probably written by Dussek, court pianist to the Prince.

These Friday evenings were looked forward to with pleasurable excitement by Frédéric. No doubt he found solace for his harassed soul in hearing and playing for the first time many of these works. To modern ears the music of Ries, Spohr, Hummel and Dussek sounds strangely old-fashioned; but one hundred years ago they were contemporary composers (with the exception of Dussek, who died in 1812), and the hand of time had not yet placed them in their respective pigeon-holes. Since Beethoven's last quartet was written, the realm of chamber-music has been enriched by numberless works of every kind, and only the works of the comparatively few great men of the earlier period are heard to-day.

Chopin had further opportunities for making music in public at some concerts given at the 'Ressource', the concert-hall which saw the first performance of his *Rondo in C* for two pianofortes. On November 21 he played his '*La ci darem*' *Variations*, and the success he had with this appearance prompted him to embark on two concerts of his own in Warsaw. The first of these took place on March 17, 1830, and during the period of four months from November to March little seems to have happened. No letters have been preserved, so we must picture Chopin alone in his misery, with only his beloved instrument on which to pour out his sorrow. The pianoforte was the only outlet of a lonely and unhappy being, clamouring for love and affection, hungering for consolation.

The first concert was a great success. The hall was full, all the boxes and stalls having been sold three days ahead. But the concert-giver was not much impressed. He played his *F minor Concerto*, the *Allegro* movement being separated from the *Adagio* and *Rondo* by a *Divertissement* for French Horn, written and

played by Görner, and in the second half the *Fantasia on Polish Airs*, Op. 13. The programme was completed by two Overtures, one by Elsner and the other by Kurpinski, and some Variations out of an opera by Paër, sung by a Madame Meier.

Chopin's own account of the concert makes amusing reading:

The first *Allegro* is accessible only to the few; there were some bravos, but I think only because they were puzzled: What is this? and had to pose as connoisseurs! The Adagio and Rondo had more effect; one heard some spontaneous shouts; but as for the Potpourri on Polish themes, in my opinion it failed to come off. They applauded, in the spirit of: let him go away knowing we were not bored.

The local musicians were divided in their opinions, none of them appearing to differ very much from present-day musicians in their manner of summing-up a colleague. Elsner thought the tone of the instrument was too dull, but Chopin says that 'the "gods" and the people sitting in the orchestra were quite content; on the other hand, the pit complained that I played too softly'. The better opinions of his compositions were expressed by the better musicians, one of them, Edouard Wolff, saying, according to Niecks, that the people of Warsaw had no idea of the real greatness of Chopin.

Chopin's pianoforte playing will be discussed in detail in a subsequent volume; but it is not difficult to understand why it did not make a deeper impression on first hearing. It was so original, so entirely personal, relying on finish and elegance rather than on bigness of tone or brilliance, and making its emotional appeal through subtlety of nuance and not by dynamic outbursts, that at first it created a feeling of surprise. In the Concertos one is carried away by the brilliance of the pianist, not by the art of the composer; and it is quite intelligible that the Warsaw audience should take more to the *Fantasia* type of piece, or the improvisations on well-known airs, or the Mazurkas and similar dance-rhythms. The music of these had an instant appeal for the Poles, and could excite their national fervour. After the second concert we shall find a greater appreciation of

Chopin's actual playing, and when he played in Warsaw for the last time seven months later he was acclaimed as their greatest executant.

If Frédéric gave the impression that the first concert did not come up to his expectations, it at least made him desirous to give another, and he only waited a week to do so. He again played the *F minor Concerto*, divided as before, but substituted the *Krakowiak* for the *Fantasia*, and concluded the programme with an improvisation on national airs. The other items included a Symphony of Nowakowski, the *Air Varié* of de Bériot, played by the violinist Bielawski, and an aria from an opera by Soliva, the chief singing teacher in Warsaw, the singer again being Madame Meier. At this concert the young pianist did not play on his own pianoforte, but on a Viennese instrument lent for the occasion by the Russian general, Diakow. Frédéric infinitely preferred the softer tone of his own, but admitted that the audience preferred the more noisy one. His letter to Titus makes out that he was much more pleased with his reception at this concert. The audience was even larger, and, after vigorous clapping, exclamations were heard from all over the hall expressing approval of his pearl-like tone, and clamouring for a third concert. He seems to have been particularly impressed by being recalled four times after the *Krakowiak*. Evidently the day of easily won *encores* had not yet dawned. In the Concerto, the musicians and the critics seem to have preferred the *Adagio* – a fact that astonished the composer. Mlle de Moriolles sent him a laurel wreath; a fellow-composer, Orłowski, wrote some Mazurkas and Waltzes on the themes of the Concerto, a compliment well-meant, but particularly annoying to Chopin, for they were published against his wishes: Brzezina, the publisher, asked for his portrait, but this Frédéric refused, as he did not 'want anyone to wrap up butter in me' (as had actually been done with the portrait of someone else). A sonnet was published in the *Warsaw Courier*, and in the *Official Bulletin* appeared exaggerated compliments and preposterous remarks that made him desperate. What upset him most was an article that declared that the Poles should be as proud of him as the Germans of Mozart; he could not bear this ridiculous over-praise.

Chopin had this time won over his public, and, no doubt,

was innately conscious of his victory; yet we find him not quite happy about the financial results of his efforts.

From both concerts, after covering the cost, I had less than 5000 florins [roughly £125], though they had never had so large an audience for a pianoforte concert as for the first one, and the second was still bigger.

One would imagine that these receipts, above the expenditure, were pretty high for those days; yet he finds cause for the following remark: 'I feel, more than ever before, that the man has not been born who can please everyone.' This proves the artist in him; for it is rare to find one who is ever satisfied either with his work, or with the remuneration for it, and many are ungrateful into the bargain. A true artist can always think that he might have done better; but the payment, whether adequate or not, should not be allowed to be a disturbing factor. Ingratitude was never to be one of Chopin's failings, though he remained watchful with his publishers, and was uncommonly successful with them.

Notwithstanding the oft-heard clamourings for a third concert, Frédéric steadfastly refused to announce one until just before his departure. He hoped to leave very soon for Vienna, and still had thoughts of the invitation to Berlin for May; but he did not want to play his *F minor Concerto* in public again. The *E minor* was almost finished; but the curious indecision of his mind was reflected in his work – he could not complete the scoring. Not until August 21 could he definitely tell his friends that it was ready for performance, and even then it was full of mistakes and careless notation. Chopin admitted that Soliva, who was the conductor at the concert, had to take the score home and correct it before a performance was possible.

The last Diet that was held in Poland was convened on May 28. At the opening of this Diet, Nicholas of Russia was very direct, and in no uncertain language told the Poles how dissatisfied he was with their government. Poland, like the rest of Europe, was in a state of upheaval: only a spark was needed to set the whole country ablaze. The revolution arrived six months later, and Poland ceased to exist as an independent country.

Meanwhile its capital was filled with nobles and their families and *entourages*, and the city was gay and joyous once again. Chopin was advised to give his concert; but again the unfinished Concerto was the stumbling-block. Foreign artists swarmed in Warsaw, taking advantage of the festive season and the enlarged population. A court concert was given in which Chopin was not invited to participate – an unexpected slight, as he was personally known both to the Czar and the Grand Duke Constantine. Among the artists engaged for the concert was Henrietta Sontag, one of the very best singers of the day, and possibly of all time. Chopin was wild with enthusiasm about her artistry, and completely captivated by her personality.

Sontag is not beautiful, but extraordinarily pretty. She charms everyone with her voice, which is not very big . . . but it is very highly cultivated; her *diminuendi* are non plus ultra, her *portamenti* lovely, and especially her ascending chromatic scales are exquisite. . . . It seems as if she breathed some perfume of the freshest flowers into the hall; she caresses, she strokes, she enraptures, but she seldom moves to tears.

He begs Titus to 'come without fail, and forget your rustic fatigues in the lap of pleasure'. In another place he says:

It is a supernatural amiability; it is coquetry, carried to such a point that it becomes natural; it is impossible to suppose that anyone could be like that by nature, without knowing the resources of coquetry. She is a million times prettier and more attractive in morning dress [*négligé*] than in evening and gala costume, although those who have not seen her in the morning also fall in love with her.

Probably what won the heart of Frédéric still more was the great singer's kindness and encouragement to Constantia Gladkowska. Chopin had called on Sontag one morning, and had met his 'ideal' with a fellow-pupil, Mlle Wolkow, and their teacher, Soliva. Whether he had met his adored one before this occasion we do not know. Perhaps this was the introduction, for in his next letter to Titus, though it is written ten weeks later, he appears to talk in a more rational manner, as if they were friends.

Towards the end of June Frédéric went to stay at Poturzyn, Titus' estate, after which he went with his parents on a visit to Count Skarbek at Zelazowa-Wola, his birthplace. He must have been in his element with Titus, and probably the friendly consolation and the tranquillity of the country did much to restore his peace of mind. Writing to Titus on August 21, 1830, he admits 'a sort of homesickness for your fields; I can't forget that birch-tree under the windows. That cross-bow, – it's so romantic! I remember how you wore me out over that cross-bow for my sins'. He goes on to discuss Gladkowska's singing. She had grown out of the pupil stage and had just made her début in the name-part in Paër's opera *Agnese*.

She does not lack much; better on the stage than in a hall. Quite apart from the tragic acting – splendid, nothing to be said about that, – the singing itself, if it weren't for the F sharp, and G, sometimes in the high register one could not ask for anything better of its kind. As for the phrasing, it would delight you; she shades gorgeously, and though on first entering her voice shook a little, afterwards she sang very bravely.

He adds that in the end she was recalled before the curtain, and received overwhelming applause.

He is still definite in his letters about his approaching departure from Warsaw, but each time something happens, or his indecisions return. Every letter to Titus names a date. On August 31 he says:

You may believe me that next week I really shall go; but I go to satisfy my vocation and my reason, which last must be very small, since it has not strength enough to destroy everything else in my head.

But before he goes he has work to do. He has arranged to rehearse the new Concerto with a string quartet, on the advice of Elsner, who, no doubt, expected trouble with the orchestral parts; and as the accompaniments to the two concertos are mainly for strings, and as Elsner well knew Chopin's careless habits, this advice was sound. But was it mere carelessness, or was it unsound knowledge of orchestration that gave so much trouble? The answer seems to be the latter.

Frédéric names a certain Linowski as being engaged in copying out the parts, and mentions a new idea that has 'come into his head':

. . . instead of violins to use violas, because on the violin it's the fifth that has most resonance, and here it is not much used. The viola will be more powerful against the violoncello, which is [playing] in its own register. . . .

The *G minor Trio*, Op. 8, which the composer had not heard for some time, was also rehearsed, and made him feel 'rather pleased' with himself.

Chopin's letters are now becoming more rambling, more detached, although he appears to have more matter. His obsession was to get the upper hand, and one feels that his hitherto great powers of concentration were for the time being evaporating. Despite his success, his knowledge of a growing command in his creative work, and the pleasurable anticipation of the Viennese trip, he cannot have been happy. He finishes the same letter (August 31) as follows:

I am glad that the secret is buried in my heart, and that what begins with you ends with me. And you can be glad that in me you have an abyss into which you can safely fling everything, as if into a second self, for your own soul has long lain at the bottom of it. I keep your letters, as if they were ribbons from a beloved one. I have the ribbon; write to me, and in a week I will enjoy myself chattering to you again.

Following this outpouring, he writes four days later to Titus in an even more hopeless vein:

I tell you, Hypocrite, that I am more crazy than usual. I am still here; I have not the strength to decide on my date; I think I shall go away to forget my home for ever; I think I shall go away to die; and how dismal it must be to die anywhere else except where one has lived! How horrible it will be to see beside my death-bed some cold-blooded doctor or servant instead of my own family. Believe me, I am sometimes ready to go to Chodkiewicz's to find tranquillity with you; then, when I

leave the house, I walk the streets, get melancholy, and come home again, what for? – Just to mope.

That is it. He must mope, must be the slave of his thoughts, must selfishly gloat over his own grief. If he had had the requisite courage to tell Constantia of his love he would have been much happier; but, fortunately for his music and for a grateful world, he was not an ordinary mortal, and could not behave like one. Our sympathy is all for him, but I do not know that he deserved it. His neurotic mind could only be satisfied by the self-glorification he felt in his misery. Most people require a stimulus to urge them to achieve – this was his urge. A little later on he philosophises:

A man can't always be happy; perhaps joy comes only for a few moments in life; so why tear oneself away from illusions that can't last long anyhow? Just as on the one hand, I regard the tie of comradeship as the holiest of things, so on the other hand, I maintain that it is an infernal invention, and that it would be better if human beings knew neither money, nor porridge, nor boots, nor hats, nor beefsteaks, nor pancakes, etc. – better than as it is.

I think that Frédéric's mind would have become completely unhinged if he had been forced to remain in Warsaw. Physically, mentally and musically it was imperative that he should leave.

On September 18, fourteen days later, he is writing about the rehearsals of the *E minor Concerto* with the quartet, saying that people seem to prefer the Finale; and he sounds quite happy: but in a trice he is back at his pet theme:

When we have rehearsed it, I shall go; but where, when I don't want to go anywhere? All the same, I don't mean to stay in Warsaw; and if you suspect any love-affair, as many persons in Warsaw do, drop it, and believe that, where my ego is concerned, I can rise above all that, and if I were in love, I would manage to conceal the impotent and miserable *passion* for another few years. Think what you like. . . . I don't want to travel with you. I'm not making it up; indeed as I love you, it would spoil that moment, worth a thousand monotonous

days, when we embrace each other abroad for the first time. I could not now await you, receive you, talk to you, as I could do then, when joy will shut out all cold conventional phrases and let one heart talk to the other in some divine tongue. . . . Then perhaps I could let myself go; could tell you what I always dream of, what is everywhere before my eyes; what I constantly hear, what causes me more joy and more sorrow than all else on earth. But don't think that I'm in love : – not I; I have put off that till later.

Here is a change of front. Since his visit to Poturzyn his letters to Titus have again become more affectionate. Is he, in his attempt to forget Constantia, trying to convince himself that Titus was more necessary to him – that the love he felt for his friend was the deeper and more concrete? Or was this mere bravado, a cloak to hide himself behind, a barrage against the eyes of his friends? He mentions a pretty girl at a party who 'reminded me of my ideal', then proceeds to tell his friend that he had written to an agent named Bartek in London, that he had decided to start in a week's time by the Cracow diligence, but had had to abandon the idea, and then begs to be understood for the delay: Titus must have been scolding him for his indecision. He then asks Titus to take him in as a clerk on his estate when he has nothing to eat, saying that he would be content to live over the stable. 'If only my health lasts, I hope to work all my life. Sometimes I wonder whether I really am lazy; whether I ought to work more, when my physical strength allows it.' He was evidently either anxious over his health, or else the ceaseless worry of his mind was affecting his body.

Joking apart, I have convinced myself that I really am not such a hopeless vagabond, and that when necessity compels me I can do twice as much work as I do now. . . . It's no use, I know that I love you and want you to love me always more and more, and that's why I scribble all this. . . . You are not the master of your thoughts; but I am, and I won't be thrown over, any more than trees will give up the foliage that brings them life, and joy, and character.

Four days later he begins another long letter by explaining

that the reason he is still in Warsaw is that his father will not allow him to travel on account of the disturbances in Germany. This was certainly a rational excuse, because the whole of Europe was soon to be in the throes of revolution. As it was, a Pole was only allowed a passport for Austria, and Frédéric could not have got beyond Vienna. He tells Titus about the rehearsal of the Concerto with full orchestra, and expresses his not too polite opinions about the Warsaw musicians who were invited to hear it. Later on he confesses that he does not imitate his friend in one particular – 'in taking sudden decisions' – but says that he has decided to leave secretly on Saturday week. It seemed as if the only way he would ever make up his mind to leave his native soil would be by someone grasping him and hauling him off. But the poignant note is struck once again when he describes an unexpected glimpse of his beloved in church:

I blundered out in a state of delightful torpor, and for a quarter of an hour didn't know what I was doing; meeting Dr. Parys, I didn't know how to explain my confusion, and had to make up a tale of a dog running under my feet and getting trodden on.

He candidly admits that he is crazy.

All this time he must have been quietly working, despite his restless spirit and apparently broken heart, for he speaks of sending to Titus 'a few silly things', but says that he had no time to copy them on that particular day.

The success of this rehearsal of the Concerto determined Frédéric to give a third concert. It was fixed for October 11, and by way of contrast he asked the two young singers Mles Wolkow and Gladkowska to sing in each half. As they were both pupils at the expense of the state, Chopin had to ask permission for them from the Minister of Public Instruction. This was readily given, and he was happy. He swears that he will be out of Poland a week after the concert, that his trunk is bought, his outfit ready, his scores corrected, his pocket-handkerchiefs hemmed, his trousers made. 'Only to say good-bye, and that's the worst.' This sounds as if arrangements were decisive for once – but his week stretched out into three.

The day after the concert he hastens to tell Titus all about it, and about his wonderful success. There is not a moment's sorrow in the letter – the world is rosy, life is worth the effort after all.

I was not a bit, not a bit nervous, and played the way I play when I'm alone, and it went well.

After a Symphony by Görner, the horn-player of the March 17 concert, came the *Allegro* of the *E minor Concerto*, 'which I just reeled off. . . . Furious applause'. Mlle Wolkow sang an Aria of Soliva, and then came the *Adagio* and *Rondo* of the Concerto. The Overture to *William Tell* of Rossini opened the second part, and was followed by Mlle Gladkowska, 'dressed just right for her face, in white, with roses on her head', singing the Cavatina from *La Donna del Lago* by Rossini 'as she has sung nothing yet'. Frédéric is in the seventh heaven, and quotes a musician, Zieliński, as having said that Gladkowska's low B was worth a thousand ducats. The programme finished with Chopin playing his *Fantasia on Polish Airs*, Op. 13.

This time I was all right and the orchestra was all right, and the pit understood. This time the last mazurka elicited big applause, after which – the usual farce – I was called up. No one hissed, and I had to bow 4 times; but properly now, because Brandt has taught me how to do it.

Evidently the young pianist was very excited and was inclined, in his performance, to rush away, for he gratefully acknowledges the debt he owes to the conductor, Soliva, who held him back. He had never enjoyed playing with the orchestra so much before; this was obviously due to two things – his experience gained at Kessler's ensemble-music parties, and the extra rehearsals for the new concerto, taken at Elsner's advice.

Chopin did not speak about the musicians' opinions of the concerto. They had expressed themselves at the orchestral rehearsal to which he had invited them, and though he had little respect for their judgement, he mentions to Titus that Soliva said after the *Rondo*: '*Il vous fait beaucoup d'honneur*'. Kurpinski

admired the originality of the work, and Elsner was attracted by its rhythm. Frédéric adds in passing that in the interval between the two parts, when they had returned from the buffet the musicians mounted the stage 'to produce an effect favourable to me'.

All his despondency had vanished. His whole time was occupied with preparations for the long-looked-for journey, soon to be an accomplished fact. On November 1, 1830, Chopin left his beloved Poland. Elsner and some intimate friends travelled with him to Zelazowa-Wola, and there they were met by a gathering of pupils from the Conservatorium of Warsaw, who had come to do him honour and sing a Cantata that Elsner had composed for the occasion. A banquet was given, toasts were drunk, and a silver goblet filled with the soil of Poland was presented to Frédéric. Karasowski gives the words of the friend who presented the gift as follows: 'May you, wherever you go, never forget your fatherland, or cease to love it with a warm and faithful heart. Think of Poland, think of your friends, who are proud to call you their countryman, who expect great things from you, whose wishes and prayers accompany you.'

It was only natural that the emotion of the moment was overpowering to the young Pole. He was separating from all he held most dear, and the parting must have been both sad and long. He had often had a presentiment that once he left his native land it would be for ever; and destiny willed it so. His heart often ached for a sight of Poland in the years to come; but either his health, or his work, or his finances, or the prevailing political conditions prevented a return. Poland was ever in his thoughts. His love for his country was almost fanatical.

Now for Kalisz, where he was to meet Titus, whom he had persuaded to go with him to Vienna. He had been miserably unhappy for most of the last two years: was the future to be any brighter? He must have determined to forget his 'ideal'; and it is not even certain whether Constantia ever knew of his adoration. She married a certain Joseph Grabowski, a small country gentleman, in 1832, and soon after the marriage became blind. Once or twice Chopin mentions her in his letters, but the pangs of his first love had not eaten deeply into his soul. He was very impressionable, and was always asking for affec-

tion and sympathy, becoming a willing victim to the joys and sorrows of being in love. The episode left no sting behind it, but it undoubtedly altered his nature: during this period he had changed from an eager, cheerful and oftentimes humorous youth to a silent, morose, and pessimistic young man. He was entering a new world, where he might not be understood, where he would have to fight his battles alone and unaided. He was not yet twenty-one; he had little money and very few friends in the new sphere of his choice. It was a vast undertaking, especially at that black period in European history, when civil war was rife all over the continent. Courage and grit were needed, and we cannot deny Frédéric these two qualities, in spite of the many evidences of his lack of decision. That he succeeded we all know: but he nearly succumbed.

## CHAPTER VII

### VIENNA AGAIN

1830-1831

BEFORE dealing with the journey to Vienna, with Chopin's life there and his doings before finally reaching his second home, Paris, we should take stock of his compositions up to the end of 1830. With the vicissitudes of his life and the widening of his outlook, his work began to assume bigger and broader shapes, and we must be clear in our minds as to just how far he got in what I shall call his first period.

It is difficult to be certain about the exact dates of some of the works, for Chopin was not in the habit of dating his manuscripts, and very often in his letters, when referring to some newly written piece, he would not mention a title. The *Krakowiak*, Op. 14, was probably the last work finished in 1828. Early in 1829 he wrote three *Waltzes*, all posthumously published: *B minor*, Op. 69, No. 2; *D flat major*, Op. 70, No. 3; and one in *E major* which is not included in the usual edition of fourteen compositions in that form. Also in 1829 we find a *Polonaise in F minor*, Op. 71, No. 3, a *Mazurka in D major*, which he re-edited in 1832, the *Marche Funèbre in C minor*, Op. 72, No. 2, the *Introduction and Polonaise* for Pianoforte and Violoncello, Op. 3 (the *Adagio* of which he wrote after the *Polonaise* the following year), and the *Second Pianoforte Concerto* in F minor, Op. 21. The *Trio* for Pianoforte, Violin and Violoncello, Op. 8, was mainly written in 1828, but as it was not finished until 1829 it should be attributed to the later date. A few of the *Études*, Op. 10, were written during 1829-1830, as can be seen in the composer's letters; and he took the complete set to Paris with him in 1831. Some songs with Polish words can also be attributed to these two years, inspired, no doubt, by the singing of Sontag and Gladkowska.

In 1830 Chopin produced the two *Mazurkas*, Op. 68, Nos. 1 and 3, in *C major* and *F major*, the *Trois Ecossaises*, Op. 72, No. 3, the *Concerto in E minor*, Op. 11, and, if we can surmise correctly from his letter to Titus on September 18, 1830, the *Andante*

*spianato and Polonaise brillante*, Op. 22. He did not attempt another work with orchestra. His troubles with the orchestras in Warsaw and Vienna over his faulty notation were not encouraging, and he must soon have recognized quite definitely that he had no gift for orchestration.

The list of works was already striking for a young man in his twenty-first year, but it is the promise of what is to come, more than the actual worth of these compositions, that arouses our interest. As Frédéric settles down to the hard realities of life we shall find fewer of the bravura passages, written primarily for effect, and more of the poetic and reflective.

On the evening of Monday, November 1, Chopin left by diligence on his eagerly awaited journey. His heart was heavy but his spirit was high. He had longed for this freedom, and was confident of the future. Vienna, he thought, was certain to welcome him. His success during his short stay there the previous year encouraged him in his expectations of fame and distinction. He did not realize that fate can be unkind, that memories can be short, nor even that circumstances could possibly arise that would be likely to stand in his way. The moment was not opportune in Vienna, nor anywhere in Central Europe, for a Pole to be exploited, or even to win the confidence of a new public. The hatred of the Pole for the German was fully reciprocated, and the Austrians, afraid of losing what they had already gained in the Partitions of Poland, were not anxious to proffer the hand of friendship to any Pole however distinguished he might be, or however devoid of political intent.

Chopin was to experience this unexpected animosity, and was made to feel his position as a foreigner very much sooner than was pleasant. The break from his native land, and from all that was most dear to him, instead of being the realization of his hopes and dreams, was to be a disastrous disappointment. For the first time he was to be faced with the grimness of life's struggles, was to feel the grip of isolation and of real loneliness – not the loneliness that he had fostered as a kind of secret joy, but the loneliness of being utterly without friends. The sorrow that had so often filled his heart in Warsaw was often imaginary: now he was to suffer in truth. The eight months that he spent in Vienna were wasted, if we judge by achievement; but they were

valuable in his evolution from youth to manhood. His development had been slow, and, as yet, self-reliance was not in his make-up. Apart from his talent and his charm he had little to recommend him—no substance, no reliability, no sense of purpose. Those qualities were to be called upon during the weary months in Vienna, and his intelligence saw to their expansion.

Titus Wojciechowski, who joined Frédéric at Kalisz, practically on the border of Poland as it then stood, was an excellent travelling companion. Not only was he the pianist's greatest friend, as we have already seen from the letters, but his character and personality, being the antithesis of Frédéric's, infused a certain confidence and solidity into his timid and nervous comrade. Of fine physique, tall, strong, determined, he was masculine in every way. He talked rarely, and then very quietly, but he was a proven friend. He is reputed to have had enormous hands, although his touch on the pianoforte was of the gentlest – a not rare phenomenon. Frédéric admired his taste, and would often send a newly finished manuscript for his friend's criticism. Their mutual admiration was exceptional, and they were extremely happy together. The weaker led the stronger – another of life's strange contradictions – and Titus was a willing victim. But as we shall see, they were not destined to share the joys of companionship for long.

On the Saturday evening, the 6th, the travellers arrived in Breslau, and decided to stay at a hotel called the Golden Goose. Chopin's restlessness, coupled with his desire to hear everything, compelled them to go that very evening to the theatre, where an opera, *Der Alpenkönig*, by Rozek von Reiter was being performed. The following night they saw *Maurer und Schlosser* by Auber, and they also heard *Das unterbrochene Opferfest* by Winter. Chopin was not satisfied with any of the performances: his standard, that of a true artist, was high. Later on, in Paris, he was to offend many people by his candid criticisms; the world will not realize that the opinion of an artist, who has lived an artist's life and suffered an artist's experiences, is of far greater value than that of any layman.

One episode that occurred during the four days' stay in Breslau is worth recording. The chief conductor or *Kapellmeister* of the town, Schnabel by name, had been kind to Chopin

when he had visited Breslau before. Frédéric called on him, and was invited to go to an orchestral rehearsal that evening. On arriving at the hall he found an amateur pianist about to rehearse the *E flat Concerto* of Moscheles. Schnabel, remembering the young Pole's talent, begged him to try the pianoforte, and Chopin improvised some variations, which had the effect of astonishing the conductor and bewildering the amateur pianist, whose profession was the law. In consequence, the young bar-rister refused to show off his mediocre talent, and Chopin, against his inclination (for he had not exercised his fingers since his Warsaw concert four weeks earlier), had perforce to agree to play at the evening concert. He went back to his hotel, and returned to the rehearsal with the score and parts of the *Adagio* and *Rondo* of his *E minor Concerto*. At the concert, besides performing these two movements, he improvised on themes from *La Muette de Portici* of Auber. His appearance was a success, and Schnabel, whom Chopin seems to have liked, was 'genuinely delighted; he kept taking me under the chin and caressing me every moment'. The Germans appear to have been confused by the compositions, and remarks were heard about the composer's light touch.

The youths enjoyed their four days in Breslau, and left for Dresden, where they arrived on the 14th. The first person Chopin called on was a Fräulein Pechwell, the young pianist with whom he had been acquainted on his last visit. She invited him to a concert on the evening of his arrival at the house of a Dr. Kreyssig, and wishing to make an effect he put on his best clothes and engaged a sedan-chair to take him. He laughed at the idea of himself being carried by bearers in livery, and had to restrain himself from the temptation to kick the bottom out of the chair. His amusing account of the first impressions of the evening is as follows: 'The master of the house came out with bows and scrapes and many compliments, and conducted me into the hall, where I found, at the two sides, eight enormous tables, at which sat a crowd of ladies. Their adornments, consisting less of diamonds than of knitting-needles, flashed in my eyes. Joking apart, the number of ladies and knitting-needles was so great that one could have feared some revolt against men, which only their baldness and their spectacles could combat;

there was a great deal of glass and a good deal of bare skin.' It is evident that the invited guests were mostly of a certain age, and the young man felt strangely out of the picture. There was some compensation for him in the excellent singing of an Italian *prima donna*, which he praises, whilst ignoring the efforts of the pianist who had invited him.

He heard two operas in Dresden, both in Italian – *La Muette de Portici* of Auber, and Rossini's *Tancredi*. Dresden, at that time, was the recognized art-centre of Germany, and that Italian opera should have held sway to the almost total exclusion of German opera seemed to Chopin just as ridiculous as it does to students of musical history to-day. Weber had had a long and bitter fight, and had succeeded in establishing national opera on some sort of footing; but his untimely death in London in 1826 allowed the supporters of the Italian party to grasp the reins once again. This régime continued to be all-powerful in Dresden until Wagner's appointment as director in January 1843. By the time he had to flee from Dresden and from Germany in 1849 because of his activities on behalf of the revolutionaries, German opera had made its foothold fairly secure. Ernest Newman in the first volume of his *Life of Richard Wagner* (1933) explains very clearly all the intrigues and machinations between the two factions. But that such a following for Italian opera should have existed in Germany, the centre of musical Europe, and essentially national in every other aspect of musical art, remains difficult to understand. The only reason I can deduce is that the Italian singers were at that time so incomparably finer than those of any other nation. Because of their popularity and the favourable opportunities offered to them, they remained the finest singers for many years, though latterly they seem to have lost this superiority, and one rarely hears a great Italian singer in these days.

Chopin's greatest delight in the old Saxon capital was meeting Klengel again. This fine old fugal enthusiast must have been lacking in all professional jealousy, and his kindness and the interest he took in the younger musician's work left an everlasting impression. Chopin held him in the deepest respect, felt that he could always learn something from talking with him, and said that he loved him as if he had known him for thirty

years. Klengel's admiration for the young Pole, whom he christened Chopski, was just as great; and besides praising the *E minor Concerto* he complimented the pianist on his rare touch and his exceptional talents as a virtuoso. He almost induced Chopin to give a recital, pleading that it was for the sake of Dresden, and not only to replenish the pianist's pocket (for Chopin had somewhat naughtily said that he could win neither fame nor money there); but there was not a free evening before the date fixed for the two Poles to leave for Prague.

Chopin was besieged with invitations to dinner-parties and to the opera, and was altogether most hospitably fêted. Despite his innate antipathy to the Germans he could not complain of the reception they gave him. There were a great many Poles in Dresden, as well as courtiers and court attendants who had been in the entourage of Augustus of Saxony, the previous king of Poland. At a party given by a Polish lady, Madame Dobrzycka, Chopin met Prince Jean, the heir to the Saxon throne, and two princesses, one the daughter of Frederick Augustus, the other a sister-in-law of the reigning king; and from them he received letters of introduction to some of the royal houses in Italy. At one time he had visions of visiting some of the Italian cities, but passport difficulties helped to dissuade him from travelling south from Vienna. He went to the wonderful art gallery in Dresden several times. Niecks quotes him as having said 'If I lived here I would go to it every week, for there are pictures in it at the sight of which I imagine I hear music'.

Prague does not seem to have captured the young man's fancy – he does not even mention it in his letters. Although a letter to Jan Matuszynski is dated Vienna, November 22, 1830, we know that he did not arrive there until 9 o'clock on the morning of the 23rd. The two friends went first to the *Hotel Stadt London*, but finding it too expensive quickly moved to the *Goldener Lamm*. Here they stayed until some lodgings that they had booked became vacant. At the moment the rooms were occupied by an English Admiral, but by December 2 the youths were installed in their new abode. Frédéric was happy. His letter to Jan, probably written on the journey from Prague, is full of nonsense, and the letter to his parents of December 1 is extremely light-hearted and gay. He speaks of eating a great

many *Strudeln* (pancakes) and of having drunk a whole bottle of Rhine wine, and makes jokes about there being 'plenty of pretty German girls' (why not Austrian?). He describes his landlady as 'a baroness, a widow, pretty, fairly young', and is delighted that she knew Poland and had heard of him there; he adds: 'If there were nothing more, such a respectable lady is worth 25 florins, especially as she likes Poles, does not care for Austrians, is herself Prussian and a very sensible woman.' He complains that a swollen nose prevents him from presenting himself at the Polish Embassy, and mentions various people to whom he has letters of introduction and who might be useful.

Fräulein Blahetka, the young pianist whom he had found so charming on his previous visit to Vienna, had gone with her father to Stuttgart; he called on Haslinger, the publisher, only to find out that neither the *C minor Sonata*, Op. 4, nor the *Variations on a German Air* (Op. Post.) had yet been published; Würfel, the piano-professor, who was one of the musicians from whom he expected assistance, was too ill to take much interest in anything – all these are mentioned as unexpected shocks. Other amusing snatches in the letter follow. Frédéric goes to bank his money, and a certain Jew, Geymüller, recognizes his name, and says that he is 'very glad to meet such a *Künstler*', but cannot advise him to give a concert, for there is a plethora of good pianists in Vienna, and only those with a big reputation can gain an audience. Chopin can only gaze at him in astonishment until he has finished, when he remarks: 'I really do not know whether it is worth my while to be heard, as I have not yet called on any of the notabilities here, even on the Ambassador, to whom I have an introduction from the Grand Duke Constantine.' He then takes his leave from the gaping bank-manager; but the memory rankles. 'Wait a bit, you *hycel* Jews!' he writes venomously. (*Hycel* is a Polish slang word of abuse.) The Admiral he describes as 'a thin, sickly, whiskered and greenish-yellow and mauve English sailor', and he then discourses still further on Haslinger. The publisher does not predict a public for the works of an unknown composer, and quite politely suggests that Chopin should give him his compositions for nothing. The parents are told that no one shall have them 'for nothing'. That is all finished. 'Pay, beast!'

On November 29 a handful of conspirators in Warsaw attempted the capture of the Grand Duke Constantine, the Russian military Dictator of Poland, and cousin of the Czar Nicholas. The plot failed, for the Grand Duke had already left with an army for the frontier. But this was all that was needed to start the conflagration, and the following day a new government was constituted and war proclaimed against the oppressors. The nation became an armed camp, everyone intoxicated with the hope of a free and united Poland once again. The Poles were always fine soldiers, especially on their own soil, and their patriotism was deeply rooted. Titus and Frédéric were wild with excitement at the news, and both decided to leave at once to join their brothers-in-arms. Titus left the following day; he was a determined fellow and could act on his decisions. Frédéric was left to weep. The next day he repented of his passivity and hired post-horses to try to catch up his friend. This was impossible; and he had perforce to return to Vienna. In the meantime his father had written to him advising him to stick to his career and not to return to Poland; his physique would not be equal to the strain, and, after all, the sacrifices that the family had made for him should not be wasted in war.

Frédéric had full cause now for unhappiness. Everything was against him. He was alone, his friends and countrymen fighting for Poland's freedom whilst he was powerless to be with them. But the worst blow was the hostility of the Viennese people, and particularly of his colleagues. They shunned him, refusing to recognize him in the street; and he constantly heard disparaging remarks about Poland and the Poles, such as 'Nothing good ever came out of Poland', and 'The good God made a mistake when he created the Poles'. To make matters worse, he had to wait for weeks at a time to receive letters from Warsaw, and never knew whether his own would reach his parents. In his letter to them written on the 'Wednesday before Christmas' (he had no calendar), he tried hard to be cheerful. One consolation he had was the cheapness of his rooms. An English family, friends of the Admiral, admired his three rooms so much that they offered him 80 florins a month for them, 30 florins more than he paid. His charming Baroness landlady had a room free on the floor above, the fourth, and as this was

equally comfortable and extremely cheap, he made a very good bargain and was actually in pocket by the transaction. As the house was in the Kohlmarkt, in the centre of the city, he could consider himself very fortunate.

About his music he says very little. He met the manager of the Kärthnerthor theatre, a Herr Duport, once a ballet dancer, and now successor to the Count Gallenberg who had so generously helped Chopin in managing his concerts on the last visit. Herr Duport was very keen that Chopin should announce a concert, but had no intention of risking any money or offering any fee, so his wish came to naught. Frédéric was under the delusion that the reputation he had gained from the previous concerts entitled him to be paid for his services. Duport, who was of a different calibre from the Count, thought otherwise: he was also aware of the bad conditions in the concert-world, and of the damaging fact that Chopin was a Pole, and this tempered his enthusiasm.

One of the first executant artists that Chopin met in Vienna was Joseph Slawik, a highly gifted violinist. He had formerly been a pupil of Pixis at the Prague Conservatorium, and when he made his début in Vienna at the age of nineteen had won an instantaneous success. After hearing Paganini, then at the height of his popularity, the young Slav realized how much he still had to learn, and on Paganini's advice went to Paris and studied for two years with Pierre Baillot, then the first violin professor at the Conservatoire. Slawik made his reappearance in Vienna at the end of 1830, and astonished everyone with his marvellous technique, many of the musicians and critics compared him favourably with Paganini. Chopin was amongst those who were amazed at his prowess, and often mentioned him in his letters, admiring particularly his feat of playing ninety-six staccato notes in one bow. The two young artists quickly became friends, and before long were contemplating the composition of a duet for their respective instruments, to take the form of a set of variations on a theme of Beethoven. Some of the variations were written, though the work was never completed; and there appears to be no existing copy of their joint effort. Later on, in 1841, Chopin incorporated some of the material of this projected work into the *Allegro de Concert*, Op. 46,

using also parts of an abortive concerto for two pianofortes, the idea of which was conceived during the morning visits of Thomas Nidecki to his room in Vienna. Joseph Slawik, for whom was predicted an outstanding future, died in 1833 at the early age of twenty-seven.

Another executant for whom Chopin formed an admiring attachment was Joseph Merk (1795-1852), the first 'cellist of the Royal Opera in Vienna. Although Merk was much older than the pianist and the violinist, the three became great friends, and wished to make a combination together: but beyond playing together at private *soirées* (unpaid ones) the wish did not bear fruit. Frédéric enjoyed playing chamber-music, and excelled in the art, which is, strangely enough, not usually favoured by concert-pianists, the probable reason for their abstinence being that they fear their reputations as soloists may be damaged.

Of original compositions, Frédéric informs his parents that he has just finished a Waltz and some Mazurkas: these can have been of little value, as no trace of them has been found. In this same letter there is a paragraph that shows us his more absurd side: at an evening party at Madame Bayer's, after the Mazurka had been danced by the company, Slawik suddenly lay down on the floor, pretending to be a sheep; at this moment an elderly German Countess 'with a big nose and a pockmarked face, did some kind of queer waltz step with long thin legs', dancing in a most angular fashion. She held up her skirts with the tips of her fingers, keeping her head turned stiffly towards her partner, 'so that her neck bones stuck out here and there'; the guests were aghast, for the countess was of noble birth, refined and quiet in manner, and the impression created must have been ludicrous; but Chopin was intensely tickled, and described the scene with the greatest glee.

It is interesting to students of musical history to read of Chopin's reactions to the art of Thalberg. Sigismond Thalberg was born in 1812, two years later than Chopin, but he had already won fame on the concert platforms of Europe. His success could not have been pleasing to the young Pole, who was now beginning to feel the pangs of jealousy poignantly for the first time; and that Thalberg was an aristocrat did not help in Chopin's first judgement. The glitter and scintillating brilliance

of this social favourite made no appeal to the hungry and disconsolate Frédéric, and later on, in Paris, when Thalberg was the acclaimed rival of Liszt in the affections of the women-folk (sole arbiters of fashion's favourites), we shall find that this dislike became an abhorrence. Thalberg had no difficulty in finding publishers for his works, whereas Chopin was already losing faith in the few publishers he had met. Vienna was not at this period living up to its reputation as the most musical city in Europe. Beethoven and Schubert had only been dead for three and two years respectively, yet they, with Haydn, might never have lived there, judging by the pre-eminent popularity of the lighter forms of music. This decline in taste was not pleasing to young Chopin, and may have been one of the reasons why his sojourn in the Austrian capital was not more musically profitable. It was disheartening for him to hear on all sides the waltzes of Lanner and Strauss (father of the 'Blue Danube' Johann Strauss), to know that publishers had little inclination to print more serious music, to see the applause that greeted the efforts of superficial artists in preference to those of the more sensitive and poetic type. How could he hope for success in such surroundings? How could he muster up the courage to announce a concert of his own? His playing and his compositions would never win favour with these light-hearted, dance-loving Viennese. Yet to satisfy his parents, who were for ever clamouring for his public appearance in Vienna, he eventually had to give in. The results were disastrous.

We shall see that Chopin was gifted with a power of sarcasm well above the average, which, as he grew older, he often used against brother-pianists. Here, in his letter to his friend Jan Matuszynski on December 26, 1830, we have evidence of it concerning Thalberg.

He plays excellently, but he's not my man. Younger than I, pleases the ladies, makes *potpourris* from *La Muette de Portici*, gets his *piano* by the pedal, not the hand, takes tenths as easily as I octaves, — has diamond shirt-studs — does not admire Moscheles; so don't be surprised that only the *tutti* of my concerto pleased him. *He also writes a concerto.*

Frédéric appears to be pleased that another pianist, Alois

Schmitt, from Frankfurt, whom he had met before and rather liked, had just received a rating from the Viennese critics. 'He is a man of over 40, and composes as if he were 80.' Another pianist who eventually won sufficient renown in Paris to challenge Chopin as a salon favourite, Theodor Döhler, likewise received scant praise. Altogether Frédéric was a stern critic of all pianists, and was almost as hard to please regarding singers. Violinists and 'cellists often won his favour – witness his tremendous admiration for Joseph Slawik and Joseph Merk, of whom he wrote 'he is the first 'cellist whom I can admire on closer acquaintance', and his later affection for Franchomme.

Chopin's detestation of the musical taste of the Viennese is seen in various tilts he makes at them in his letters.

Among the numerous pleasures of Vienna the hotel evenings are famous. During supper Strauss or Lanner play waltzes. After every waltz they get huge applause; and if they play a *Quodlibet*, or jumble of opera, song and dance, the hearers are so overjoyed that they don't know what to do with themselves. It shows the corrupt taste of the Viennese public.

That is contained in a letter to his parents written during the last few days of 1830. In a letter to his old master, Elsner, dated January 26, 1831, Frédéric tries to explain the apparent difficulty he has had in fulfilling his promise to get certain of the professor's compositions published.

Joseph Czerny [no relation whatsoever to the indefatigable exercise-manufacturer Carl] has solemnly promised me that your Quartet shall be ready by St. Joseph's day. He says he could not deal with it before, because he has been issuing Schubert's works, many of which are still waiting for the press. This will probably delay the issue of your second manuscript. So far as I have yet been able to observe, Czerny is not one of the rich publishers here, and therefore cannot boldly spend money on works which cannot be played at *Sperl's* or *Zum Römischen Kaiser* [two favourite restaurants]. Here, waltzes are called works! And Strauss and Lanner, who play them for dancing, are called *Kapellmeistern*. This does not mean that everyone thinks like that; indeed, nearly everyone laughs about

it; but only waltzes get printed. . . . Haslinger is now bringing out Hummel's last Mass. He lives only on Hummel; all the same, the last things, for which he had to pay him highly, are not selling well. That is why he is holding back all manuscripts and printing only Strauss. As every barrel-organ can play Strauss to-day, perhaps in a few months they will be playing Nidecki; though in another sense.

Nidecki was a young Polish pianist and friend of Frédéric's who was trying his luck in a different branch of music, hoping to gain a fortune from a comic opera which had just been accepted.

One can see from these letters that Chopin was losing all faith in either earning money or winning fame in Vienna. Neither as a pianist nor as a composer could he expect success from such an uninterested people. What was he to do? He was living cheaply at his apartment, and he contrived to eat as inexpensively as possible at the restaurants he frequented; but he knew that his father and mother had to strain all their resources to provide him with enough money to exist. How was he ever to be able to leave Vienna, and for where? He would have to beg sooner or later.

But his disappointment in the musical taste of Vienna was by no means the only cause, or the chief one, of his unhappiness. The war in Poland was dragging on; the early victories did not continue; and each day saw the accumulation of Russia's power which must finally swoop down upon the split-up Polish armies and crush them. All Europe was conscious of this, but none of the other countries would venture a helping hand. Frédéric knew it, and the Austrians knew it also. They did not mind looking on at the humiliation of their neighbour. They had shared in the spoils of the previous Partition, and felt under no obligation to save her. There were many Poles in Austria, particularly in Vienna, and the war-fever there was the paramount excitement. As a consequence, Vienna had no time for resident Poles, and very little time to devote to serious activities such as music. The waltzes of Strauss and his kind were able to satiate the desire for melody and rhythm; music worthy of the name, and reputable composers, had to go to the wall. Chopin was not the only musician to be affected, but he was in the frame of mind to imagine that he was the chief, if not the only,

sufferer. He became more disconsolate, more morose, more disgusted with life.

With this pessimistic outlook, and the eternal fear for his country, his thoughts constantly flew back to his 'ideal', the opera-singer who remained in Warsaw. But his attitude is changing. He begins to picture himself as the wronged one and thinks that he has been treated badly, that she has never cared for him. Every kind of hallucination occupies his mind and in the turmoil of his brain his love often switches to hatred – not an uncommon thing in normal beings, but enough totally to destroy Frédéric's peace of mind. He asks his friend Jan on December 26, 1830:

Is there really even a little change? Did she not fall ill? I could easily believe some such thing about so sensitive a creature. Don't you think so? Is it perhaps the terror of the 29th? [The revolution broke out on the previous 29th of November.] May God forbid its being because of me! Calm her, say that, so long as my strength lasts – that till death – that even after death my ashes will strew themselves under her feet. But that's all nothing, whatever you can say – I will write. I would have written long ago, would not have fretted over it so long; but people! – If by any chance it should fall into strange hands, it might injure her reputation; so it is better you should be my interpreter; speak for me, '*et j'en conviendrai*'.

The irresolute nature is breeding conflicting thoughts. Deep down in his heart he knows that his love for Constantia is not substantial enough to counterbalance his love for his work; but the novelty of Vienna has worn off, and in its stead is the non-realization of his dreams and the tragedy of his country; these force him back into that chaotic state of mind which dominated his whole being during those last hateful months in Warsaw. His enjoyment of his own misery was rapidly becoming his main occupation. A momentary ejaculation in the same letter – 'Const – I can't even write the name, my hand is not worthy' – is another evidence of his lack of control. In his next letter to Jan a week later he inquires where she is; and in a despairing letter written during the following Spring restraint is thrown to the winds:

Your voice or that of Titus would rouse me from this dead state of indifference. To live or to die seems all one to me today. . . . Tell my parents I am cheerful and lack nothing; that I'm enjoying myself grandly and am never alone. You can tell her the same if she sneers. If not, then tell her that she need have no fear, I am bored everywhere. I am not well; don't write that to my parents. Everyone asks what is the matter with me. I'm out of temper. Hube looks after my health. I have a cold. Anyhow, you know what is wrong with me.

Undoubtedly Chopin was in a sadly neurotic state. To know of Constantia's hatred would have pleased him as much as a convincing manifestation of her love. He was thoroughly out of humour with the world and all the people in it except his family, whom he always adored, and his particularly few intimate friends. It is sad to see him begging Jan not to disclose the state of his health to his parents. Evidently the first tentacles of the disease which he so dreaded were making themselves apparent. He had not the courage to tell his people, for he intuitively felt that they were always nervous about his physical strength and he made a point of disarming their suspicion. Look at his letter to them dated May 14, which could not have been much later than this last letter to Jan:

As for me, I am well, which I feel to be a great comfort in trouble. But for my unexpected good health, I don't know what I should do. Perhaps Malfatti's soups have poured some kind of Balsam into my veins, which destroys all tendency to illness?

In his next budget a fortnight later he apologizes for the dullness of his letter and begs them not to put it down to indisposition. 'I am quite well, and enjoying myself finely' – and to show off his energy he proceeds 'To-day I got up early, and practised till two; then I went out to dine, and met the good Kandler, who, as you know, has promised me letters to Cherubini and Paër.' Presenting to them his most cheerful side he speaks of a Jewish violinist named Herz playing his own Variations on Polish airs.

Poor Polish tunes! You don't know with what *majufasy* [ceremonial songs sung by pious Jews at their Sabbath meal] you are to be interlarded, to entice the public by calling that Polish music. After that, try to defend Polish music, express any opinion about it, and you'll be taken for crazy; all the more as Czerny, Vienna's oracle in the manufacture of Viennese taste, has never yet used a Polish melody for variations. . . . What is happening to you all? I dream of you, I dream! Will there be any end to the bloodshed? I know what you will say to me, 'Patience!' I comfort myself with that.

The war is now an obsession with him. It obliterates every other thought. He cannot practise; he cannot compose; he cannot make up his mind to give a public concert, although his parents continually press him to do so. He asks them to forgive him for not being cheerful about himself; he may have better news for them later. 'All I want is to carry out your wishes; I have not succeeded in that yet.'

Chopin had played once in Vienna during this visit, at a charity concert given in the Redoutensaal on April 2. There were various other artists, but the only name on the programme which required a distinguishing mark was Chopin's. All the others were known, but he was labelled 'pianoforte-player'. How strange is fame! Some of the other names were well known in Vienna then, and are occasionally mentioned in letters and biographies of that period – that is their only claim to greatness.

When the summer was too far advanced and most of the more fashionable Viennese had left for their country residences, the irresolute Chopin decided to give a concert. Everything was against him. To give a recital in the middle of summer to-day in any capital of Europe would be just as crazy as it was one hundred years ago. Besides this, cholera was invading the whole of Europe, and fast driving everyone away from the cities. Because of all these troubles, the anxiety of the war, and the insurrectionary unrest which prevailed in every country, the concert was a fiasco. The expenses were far greater than the receipts, and the critics had flown. Chopin was distinctly a poorer man by the effort, and had gained nothing. This was the final blow. He resolved to leave Vienna as quickly as possible. The whole

eight months had done nothing to advance him. Those long-cherished dreams of conquering the world by his playing had vanished, and he realized the bitter truth of failure. But the thought that hurt most and that was continually before him was the drag he must still be on his parents. He was forced now to write and ask for help; he had not enough to pay for his journey. In his letter to them on June 25th, he prepares the ground by telling them that he 'preserves every Kreutzer as carefully as that ring in Warsaw [the ring which the Czar presented to him in 1825]. Unfortunately, I have already been enough expense to you.' In July he writes:

I shall probably need to take a little more money from Peter's bank than Papa intended; I am as careful as possible, but really I can't help it; I should have too light a purse for the journey. Afterwards, God forbid, if I fell ill or anything, you might reproach me for not taking more with me. Forgive me; you see, I have been here through May, June and July on this money, and I pay for more dinners than in winter. I don't do this on my own initiative, but rather on a warning from others. I hate to be obliged to ask you for it now. Papa has already spent so many pennies for me; I know how hard he has to struggle for the pennies, and nowadays even struggling doesn't help; but, hope! I mind asking more than you mind giving; but it's easier for me to take than for you to give.

He dare not tell them the reason of his poverty, that the loss on his concert was mainly responsible. That would have been too shattering to their faith in him; so he blames the higher cost of his dinners and hints that his invitations are fewer during the summer than the winter months. This is a natural observation, but it was evading the point.

One must not suppose that Chopin was a bad companion because of his warped outlook. He could be easily amused and was always willing to entertain others with his drollery. From his letters we can discover many evidences of complete happiness, where he has obviously forgotten his heartaches and relegated his troubles to the wind. His mode of life he describes in the letter to Jan Matuszynski on December 26, 1830, from which quotations have already been made:

I am on the fourth floor; it's true it's in the best street, but I should have to look well out of the window to see what is going on there. My room – you'll see it in my new album when I return to you; young Hummel is making a drawing of it – is big and comfortable with three windows; the bed opposite the windows; a splendid pantaleon [pianoforte] on the right side, a sofa on the left; mirrors between the windows; in the middle a fine, big, round mahogany table; a polished parquet floor. It's quiet; after dinner His Lordship does not receive; so I can concentrate my thoughts on all of you. In the morning I am called by an insufferably stupid servant; I get up, they bring me coffee; I play, and mostly have a cold breakfast; about 9 comes the *maitre* for the German language; after that I usually play; then Hummel has been drawing me, and Nidecki learning my concerto. All this in a dressing-gown till 12. After that comes a very worthy German, Leidenfrost, a German who works at the prison; and if the weather is fine, we go for a walk on the glacis round the town, after which I go to dinner, if I am invited anywhere. If not, we go together to the place frequented by the entire academic youth; that is: Zur Boemische Köchin. After dinner black coffee is drunk in the best Kaffeehaus; that is the custom here. Then I pay visits, return home at dusk, curl my hair, change my shoes, and go out for the evening; about 10, 11, or sometimes 12, – never later, – I come back, play, weep, read, look, laugh, go to bed, put the light out, and always dream about some of you.

One gathers from this that Frédéric was not leading the life of a severe student; that he was not over-anxious about devoting most of the day to his instrument or to his composition; that he was always ready to receive friends or visitors with amiability; that he was not averse from accepting invitations to dinners and parties; in short, that he was leading the life of a young man desirous of establishing himself in a foreign *milieu*. We cannot blame him for that – but with so much gaiety and a large circle of acquaintances there was no necessity for his frequent despondency. He writes proudly about his many invitations to the houses of distinguished people, where his affable manners and musical gifts made him easily welcome.

A certain Madame Beyer, the wife of a Russian-born Pole, with the Christian name of Constantia, was a great favourite of

his. 'I love to go there for the reminiscence; all the music, the pocket-handkerchiefs and table napkins have her name on them.' This was one of the few houses where Chopin liked to make music. Nothing irritated him so much as the requests from hostesses to play after dinner. On such an occasion he once tartly retorted that he 'did not think the dinner was good enough'.

Another family in which he always felt at home was that of Dr. Malfatti, the physician to the King of Austria, and the doctor who attended Beethoven during his last illness four years earlier. Chopin had met the Doctor soon after his arrival in Vienna. 'Malfatti,' he writes in the letter of December 1, 1830, to his family, 'received me most amiably, most heartily, as if I were his cousin. As soon as he had read my name, he embraced me, and said he would do all he could to serve me'. That the Doctor must have made a deep impression on Frédéric can be deduced from the ending of the same letter: 'All is well with me. I trust in God and in Malfatti – the magnificent Malfatti – that it will be still better.' At the end of December Chopin writes, 'If I am late for dinner, Malfatti threatens to perform a very painful operation on me; I won't write what, for it's ugly. . . . Malfatti likes me, I am glad to say.' About the same time he writes to Jan: 'You must know that this rare man – in the full sense of the word a *man* – Dr. Malfatti, is so considerate of everyone, that, if we come to dine with him, he searches out Polish food for us.' On May 14, 1831, Frédéric describes a visit that he made to the Doctor's country home.

You can't think what a lovely place he is in; this day week I was there with Hummel. Taking us round his property, he displayed its beauties by degrees; and when we reached the top of the hill, we didn't want to come down. The Court honours him with a visit every year, and the nearest neighbour is the Princess of Anhalt, who doubtless envies him his garden. On one side you see Vienna under your feet, looking as if it joined Schönbrunn; on the other side, tall hills, and the villages and monasteries scattered about on them, make one forget the pomp and tumult of the noisy city.

There can be no doubt that the two were mutually attracted, and that Malfatti's home and influence were of great moment to

Chopin during those dismal eight months. The Doctor provided him with letters to some of the distinguished musicians in Paris, which were to be of material assistance to the young traveller.

The last letter that he wrote to his family in July before leaving Vienna contains an amusing episode which shows that Frédéric, despite his wailings, retained his boyish instincts. With some friends he went to a neighbouring place called St. Veit.

It's a pretty place; but I can't say the same about the so-called Tivoli, where there is a sort of *carrousel*, or sliding on vehicles; what they call here a '*Rutsch*'. It's an idiotic thing. However, crowds of people slide down in these things, for no object; I didn't even want to look at them. But afterwards, as there were eight of us (and all good friends), we began racing down to try who could go fastest, helping ourselves with our feet, competing with each other; and from being heartily disgusted with this silly Viennese game, I became an enthusiastic proselyte; till I recovered my senses, and realized that these things are occupying strong and healthy bodies and muddling capable minds; and this at a moment when humanity is calling on such to defend it. The devil take them!

Franz Kandler, musicologist and critic, was another whose acquaintance developed into friendship. He invited Chopin to visit the Imperial Library with him, which was then reputed to contain the finest collection of musical manuscripts. Suddenly Frédéric saw the name 'Chopin' on a book in one of the cases. 'Rather thick, and in a good binding; I think: I never heard of any other Chopin. There was a Champin; so I supposed it might be his name misspelt, or some such thing. I take it up, look; my hand. Haslinger has presented the manuscript of my Variations to the library. – 'Geese,' I say to myself; – 'You have found something to keep!'

On another occasion, at the house of Alois Fuchs, a collector, whilst examining his collection of 400 autographs, Chopin discovered a bound copy of his *Rondo*, Op. 73, for two pianofortes. This elated him considerably; it satisfied his pride, though he valued still more the presentation to him by his host of a page of Beethoven's writing.

There were plenty of people in Vienna who wished to honour the young Pole, who were delighted to be of any service to him, who would entertain him for himself and not for his music. Had he been a rational being all would have been well, but his uncontrolled nature would often rebel against kindness, and misunderstand the purpose of extended sympathy, and back he would go to his solitude. In a notebook written at the end of the Spring of 1831 is the following harangue against life which portrays his disordered mind:

To-day it was beautiful on the Prater. Crowds of people with whom I have nothing to do. I admired the foliage; the spring smell and that innocence of nature brought back my childhood's feeling. A storm was threatening, so I went in, but there was no storm. Only I get melancholy; – why? I don't care for even music to-day; it's late, but I'm not sleepy; I don't know what is wrong with me. And I've started my third decade! – The papers and posters have announced my concert, it's to be in two days' time, and it's as if there were no such thing; it doesn't seem to concern me. I don't listen to the compliments; they seem to me stupider and stupider. I wish I were dead; and yet I should like to see my parents. Her image stands before my eyes: I think I don't love her any more, and yet I can't get her out of my head. Everything I have seen abroad till now seems to me old and hateful, and just makes me sigh for home, for those blessed moments that I didn't know how to value. What used to seem great to-day seems common; what I used to think common is now incomparable, too great, too high. The people here are not my people; they're kind, but kind from habit; they do everything too respectably, flatly, moderately. I don't want even to think of moderation. I'm puzzled, I'm melancholy, I don't know what to do with myself; I wish I weren't alone!

About July 15 he wrote to his parents as follows:

At last I have my passport. But I can't get off on Monday; only on Wednesday we start for Salzburg, and from there to Munich. You must know that I asked to have the passport *visé* for London. The police gave the visa, but the Russian embassy kept the passport two days, and then gave it back with per-

mission to travel, not to London, but to Munich. Never mind, thought I; only let M. Maison, the French Ambassador, sign it.

Besides these bothers we have had still another; starting for Bavaria, I must have a *Gesundheitspass* [health certificate] on account of cholera; otherwise one can't cross the Bavarian frontier. . . . People here are terribly frightened of cholera; you can't help laughing. They are selling printed prayers against cholera, they won't eat fruit; most of them are fleeing from the town.

In this letter he writes rather despondently for the first time to his parents:

I lack nothing except more life and spirit; I'm tired, but sometimes as cheerful as at home. When I get a melancholy mood I go to Madame Szaszek; there I usually find several nice Polish women whose sincere and really hopeful talk always gives me so good an opinion of myself that I begin to imitate the Viennese generals. It's a sort of new *polichinelle*, just invented by me; you have never seen it, but everybody that looks at it bursts out laughing. Then again there are days when you can't get two words out of me, and no understanding why. . . . Often in the street I run after someone who looks like Jasio or Titus. Yesterday I would have sworn a man's back belonged to Titus, and it was some confounded Prussian. Don't let all these epithets give you a bad impression of my Viennese education; it's true that they have neither such polite manners nor well-chosen turns of speech; except 'Gehorsamer Diener' [your obedient servant] at the end; but I don't pick up anything that is essentially Viennese. I don't even know how to dance a waltz properly; that's a sufficient instance! My piano has heard only Mazurkas.

Karasowski maintains that in this letter Frédéric mentions the writing of a Polonaise which he intended leaving with Würfel; also that his letters from home now bear a large sanitary stamp after having been opened. I think that this Polonaise is the Op. 22 published in 1836 as *Andante spianato et Grande Polonaise avec Orchestre*, mentioned in Frédéric's letter to Titus on September 18, 1830.

In the same letter, Chopin refers to his side-whiskers, which he seems to have succeeded in growing only on one side. 'I have let my moustache grow on the right side,' he writes, 'and it's – quite long. (There's no need for it on the left side, because it's the right that faces the public.)'

Just before Chopin left Vienna he received a letter from one of his fellow-countrymen, a man of letters, and a friend of his parents in Warsaw, Witwicki by name. The words, so akin to his own thoughts, made an indelible impression, and served to pin his faith still more to his true ideal, his patriotism.

You should be the creator of Polish opera; I am profoundly convinced that you might be, and, as a Polish national composer, could discover by your talent an extremely rich vein which would bring you no ordinary fame. May you always keep nationality in view, nationality and once again nationality. It is an empty word to the common run of writers, but not to a talent such as yours. There is a native melody, just as there is a native climate. Mountains, forests, rivers and prairies all have their inward native voice, though not every soul is aware of it. I am convinced that Slav opera, brought to life by a real talent, by a composer full of feeling and of ideas, will shine one day in the world of music like a new sun, perhaps even rising above all others, with as much melody as Italian opera, more sentiment and incomparably deeper thought. Whenever I think of it, dear monsieur Frédéric, I nurse the sweet hope that you will be the first to delve into the vast treasures of Slav melody; if you do not follow this path, you will be voluntarily renouncing the highest laurels.

Leave imitation to others, to the mediocre; for yourself, be original, national; perhaps at first you will be misunderstood; but perseverance and improvement in your own chosen field will assure you a name in posterity. . . . I hear that you are fretting and pining in Vienna. I can feel for you; no Pole can now be happy, when the life of his country is at stake. It is to be hoped that you will always remember, dear friend, that you left us, not to languish, but to perfect yourself in your art, and to become the consolation and the glory of your family and of your country.

Chopin left Vienna on July 20, 1831, accompanied by a

brother Pole, Kumelski, with whom he had lately become friendly. The passport was only valid as far as Munich, which city was reached via Linz and Salzburg. Frédéric was forced to remain in Munich longer than he wished, but he appears to have lost his Viennese inactivity, for he quickly got to know the leading local musicians who, having heard both his playing and his compositions privately, successfully induced him to make a public appearance. According to Karasowski Chopin played his *E minor Concerto* at a concert of the Philharmonic Society, where the audience, 'carried away alike by the beauty of the composition, and the charm and poetry of his execution, overwhelmed the young virtuoso with hearty and genuine applause'. Niecks refutes this. After searching through all the Munich papers of that time, he found only one reference to Chopin's appearance there. The occasion was a morning concert given by Chopin, without orchestra, with the assistance of four singers, a clarinet-player and a *Kapellmeister* (probably the accompanist), in the hall of the Philharmonic Society, the concert being attended by a 'very select audience'. The pianist played his *E minor Concerto* and the *Fantasia on Polish Airs*, Op. 13, and according to the criticism, which Niecks prints in full, had a great success, both as pianist and composer.

The reason for Chopin's long stay in Munich was purely financial – he was waiting for more money from his father. Directly on receipt of this, he set off on the long road to Paris. France was the obvious refuge for outcast Poles. She had often been the ally of their country; she had always been hospitable; Napoleon had placed their country on the map again, and there had been several Polish legions in the armies of France. Chopin felt certain of a warm welcome; his father had been born in France, and this appeared to Frédéric an additional reason for him to expect shelter there. So, armed with a *passeport en passant par Paris à Londres*, which he had taken on the advice of Herr Beyer in Vienna, and which he continually referred to throughout his life in Paris – ('I am here only in passing') – he set off for Stuttgart. There he was struck a bitter blow: Warsaw had fallen to the Russians. This was on September 8, 1831. His grief and desolation on hearing the news prostrated him. His reason almost gave way. Was ever a more poignant collection

of words penned by a young man of twenty-one than the following, taken from his note-book?

The suburbs are destroyed, burned. – Jas, Wilus probably dead in the trenches. I see Marcel a prisoner! That good fellow Sowinski in the hands of those brutes! Paszkiewicz! – Some dog from Mohilov holds the seat of the first monarchs of Europe. Moscow rules the world! Oh God, do You exist? You're there, and You don't avenge it – How many more Russian crimes do You want – or – or are You a Russian too? – My poor Father! The dear old man may be starving, my mother not able to buy bread? Perhaps my sisters have succumbed to the ferocity of Muscovite soldiery let loose! Oh Father, what a comfort for your old age! Mother! Poor suffering Mother, have you borne a daughter to see a Russian violate her very bones! – Mockery! Has even her grave [his sister Emilia's] been respected? Trampled, thousands of other corpses are over the grave – What has happened to her? [Gladkowska] – Where is she? – Poor girl, perhaps in some Russian's hands – a Russian strangling her, killing, murdering! Ah, my Life, I'm here alone; come to me, I'll wipe away your tears, I'll heal the wounds of the present, remind you of the past – the days when there were no Russians, the days when the only Russians were a few who were very anxious to please you, and you were laughing at them because I was there – Have you your mother? – Such a cruel mother, and mine is so kind – But perhaps I have no mother, perhaps some Russian has killed her, murdered – My sisters, raving, resist – father in despair, nothing he can do – and I here, useless! And I here with empty hands! Sometimes I can only groan, and suffer, and pour out my despair at the piano! – God, shake the earth, let it swallow up the men of this age, let the heaviest chastisement fall on France, that would not come to help us –

– The bed I go to – perhaps corpses have lain on it, lain long – yet to-day that does not sicken me. Is a corpse any worse than I? A corpse knows nothing of father, of mother, or sisters, of Titus; a corpse has no beloved, its tongue can hold no converse with those who surround it – a corpse is as colourless as I, as cold, as I am cold to everything now –

The clocks in the towers of Stuttgart strike the hours of the night. How many new corpses is this minute making in the world? Mothers losing children, children losing mothers – So

much grief over the dead, and so much delight! A vile corpse and a decent one – virtues and vice are all one, they are sisters when they are corpses. Evidently, then, death is the best act of man – And what is the worst? Birth; it is direct opposition to the best thing. I am right to be angry that I came into the world – What is the use of my existence to anyone? I am not fit for human beings, for I have neither snout nor calves to my legs; and does a corpse have them? A corpse also has no calves, so it lacks nothing of a mathematical fraternity with death – Did she love me, or was she only pretending? That's a knotty point to get over – Yes, no, yes, no, no, yes – finger by finger – 'Does she love me?' Surely she loves me, let her do what she likes –

Father! Mother! Where are you? Corpses? Perhaps some Russian has played tricks – oh wait – wait – But tears – they have not flowed for so long – oh, so long, so long I could not weep – how glad – how wretched – Glad and wretched – If I'm wretched, I can't be glad – and yet it is sweet – This is a strange state – but that is so with a corpse; it's well and not well with it at the same moment. It is transferred to a happier life, and is glad, it regrets the life it is leaving and is sad. It must feel as I felt when I left off weeping. It was like some momentary death of feeling; for a moment I died in my heart; no, my heart died in me for a moment. Ah, why not for always! – Perhaps it would be more endurable then – Alone! Alone! – There are no words for my misery; how can I bear this feeling –

Mrs. Voynich, the translator of Chopin's Collected Letters, questions the authenticity of this fragment, but includes it in deference to the conviction of Dr. Opienski, who says that 'no Polish biographer has ever doubted' it. Personally I can see no reason why Chopin should not have written it, for the national calamity would clearly have a devastating effect upon his mind. It is generally supposed that the *Étude in C minor*, Op. 10, No. 12, was inspired by the terrible news, and it is often called the 'Revolutionary' Study. This is no effeminate Chopin; it has all the acrid bitterness of a man filled to the brim with venom and hatred.

Towards the middle of September Chopin left Stuttgart for Paris. He was now at the mercy of Fate, though much more resigned to what it held out to him. Was Paris to repeat the disappointment of Vienna? If so, he was finished. He could

not go back to Warsaw, even if the entry were made possible; this would mean defeat in the eyes of his family. But he was destined to become Poland's greatest ambassador in the truest sense. No politician or statesman, no diplomat, no courtier could better carry the message of hope and defiance from a wiped-out nation, a trampled people not even allowed to speak their own language in their own country. Noble as were the power and eloquence of the three great Polish poets Mickiewicz, Slowacki and Krasinski, they had not the universal appeal, nor have they had the lasting effect of the poetry and melody of Chopin. His music was even more national than the words of his countrymen, and has remained the avenue through which the love and sympathy of the outside world have poured for the best part of a century of Poland's misery. No wonder that the Polish peoples honour Chopin as their greatest son.



CHOPIN. BRONZE BY OSTROWSKI

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## CHAPTER VIII

### PARIS

1831

PARIS, the centre of the world of art in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was seen by Chopin for the first time during the third week of September, 1831. He had travelled from Stuttgart, via Strasbourg, alone; for his friend, Kumelski, had left him at the Württemberg capital to go to Berlin. The mixture of bewilderment and ecstasy that Paris must have produced in the lonely, disconsolate and poverty-stricken young Pole would have pleased the imagination of a Balzac; such a moment would have been sufficient material to have started him off on another contribution to the *Comédie Humaine*.

The earliest news we have of Chopin in Paris is an account of his first impression written to Kumelski on September 18.

Every Frenchman dances and shouts, even if his bones are bare. . . . There is the utmost luxury, the utmost swinishness, the utmost virtue, the utmost ostentation; at every step advertisements of venereal disease; shouting, racket, bustle, and more mud than it is possible to imagine; one can perish in this paradise, and it is convenient from this point of view, that nobody asks how anybody lives. You can walk in the streets in winter, dressed in rags, and frequent tip-top society; one day you can eat the most hearty dinner for 32 sous in a restaurant with mirrors, gilding and gas lighting, and the next you can lunch where they will give you enough for a dicky-bird to eat, and charge three times as much: that happened to me before I had paid the necessary tax on ignorance. What a lot of charitable ladies! They just run after people . . . I am sorry that, in spite of Benedykt's efforts, the memory of Teresa [I don't know who is meant here] forbids me to taste forbidden fruit. But I already know several lady vocalists, and lady vocalists here are even more anxious for duets than those of the Tyrol.

Perhaps there may be a superabundance of letter quota-

tions at present, but it is of interest to have these impressions first hand, and in Chopin's droll manner. The novelty of Western Europe and the varied environments were of great moment to him. The manners, the pleasures, the physiognomies, the tastes of the French were completely strange to this somewhat naïve youth; just as curious to him were the beautiful buildings, the thronged streets, the absence of snow, the rarity of seeing a fur coat. He tells Kumelski of his room on the fifth floor at No. 27, Boulevard Poissonnière, the smallness of it, its furnishings of mahogany, and a balcony from which he can see 'from Montmartre to the Panthéon and the whole length of the fashionable quarter; many persons envy me my view, but none my stairs'.

Chopin did not stay long here; for that matter, his restlessness led to many changes of address. He had at least nine different abodes in Paris, and this, with his many trips to Nohant, and those to Germany, to Majorca, to England and Scotland, should suggest that his dissatisfaction could be attributed to his pulmonary complaint.

The description of Paris which Frédéric gave to his friend could quite easily stand for to-day. However much modern mechanism may have altered the mode of life of her inhabitants, however greatly changed her outlook has become in the evolution of a century that has contained two devastating wars, each of which almost broke her back, she has never lost her exuberance of spirit. The Parisians have a wonderful knack of wearing their emotions on their sleeves; whether it be joy or sorrow they insist on giving vent to their feelings and infecting everyone and everything with their own effervescence. But this was the Paris of the Boulevards, of the pleasure-hunting throng, the *habitués* of the open-air cafés and restaurants (which are the envy and despair of the rest of the world), the lovers of the night-life of the gayest city in Europe. It was not the Paris that Chopin was seeking—the art-loving centre, the home of culture, the birthplace of the Romantics, the incubator which hatched out new religions, the city of aristocrats, elegance and fine manners. How long would it take him to pierce the inner shell and become a personage in the society of great men and fine families? This thought must have been pre-

eminent in his mind during those first days. He had only a few letters – one from Dr. Malfatti to Paër, the conductor at Court, and some to various publishers. Would these open the door for him, would his talent be considered equal to the privilege of an *entrée* into this brilliant circle? At the back of his mind was the thought of his failure in Vienna, where he had counted upon success, and where he had not been entirely unknown. Here he did not possess a single friend. We shall see that it was precisely because of the aristocratic elegance of Paris with her culture and her new spirit of romanticism, that Chopin surprisingly found himself accepted by the Parisians as one of themselves, found himself pitchforked into the very core of their artistic life.

Although Frédéric arrived with 'very few introductions', he appears to have made the acquaintance of several famous men extraordinarily quickly. The letter of Dr. Malfatti to Ferdinando Paër (1771–1839), the composer of the opera *Agnes* with which Constantia Gladkowska is associated in a previous chapter, known to posterity chiefly as an oratorio composer, proved of inestimable worth. Through Paër, Frédéric met Rossini, Cherubini, Baillot and Kalkbrenner almost at once, though it was the last-named, then the most renowned pianoforte teacher in Europe, who impressed him the most. Chopin was extremely enthusiastic in his early letters about Kalkbrenner, telling Kumelski that he was 'the first pianist of Europe. He is one whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to untie. Those Herzes, and so on, – I tell you they are just wind-bags and will never play any better'. To Titus he is even more explosive with his eulogies in his letter of December 12, 1831.

You would not believe how curious I was about Herz, Liszt, Hiller etc. – They are all zero beside Kalkbrenner. If Paganini is perfection, Kalkbrenner is his equal, but in quite another style. It is hard to describe to you his calm, his enchanting touch, his incomparable evenness, and the mastery that is displayed in every note; he is a giant, walking over Herz and Czerny and all, – and over me. What can I do about it? When I was introduced, he asked me to play something. I should have liked to hear him first; but, knowing how Herz plays, I put my pride in my pocket and sat down. I played my *E Minor*

*Concerto* . . . and astonished Kalkbrenner, who at once asked me, was I not a pupil of Field, because I have Cramer's method and Field's touch. (That delighted me.) I was still more pleased when Kalkbrenner, sitting down to the piano and wanting to do his best before me, made a mistake and had to break off! But you should have heard it when he started again; I had not dreamed of anything like it. Since then we meet daily; either he comes to me or I to him; and on closer acquaintance he has made me an offer; that I should study with him for three years, and he will make something really – really out of me. I answered that I know how much I lack; but that I cannot exploit him, and three years is too much. But he has convinced me that I can play admirably when I am in the mood, and badly when I am not; a thing which never happens to him. After close examination he told me that I have no school; that I am on an excellent road, but can slip off the track. That after his death, or when he finally stops playing, there will be no representative of the great pianoforte school. That even if I wish it, I cannot build up a new school without knowing the old one; in a word: that I am not a perfected machine, and that this hampers the flow of my thoughts. That I have a mark in composition; that it would be a pity not to become what I have the promise of being.

This is an extraordinary letter from a young pianist who had so often been acclaimed and had been spoken of as being amongst the foremost players of the day. Also it seems strange on first reading that Chopin should have been so captivated with the cold, though doubtless beautiful, style of the pedagogue. He wrote to his parents and to Elsner in the same laudatory strain, but judging by his letter to Elsner of December 14, he had not the same enthusiastic response. Although he suspects a little intrigue on the part of his parents, he must have been influenced in some manner by Elsner's advice; for he tries hard to convince his old professor of the reason why he accepted lessons from Kalkbrenner. Elsner, quite rightly, was astounded to hear that this famous teacher of a '*Méthode pour apprendre le Piano à l'aide du Guide-mains*' should require three years to expound his theories to an already fully-equipped technician, and suggested that his old and favourite pupil should devote more time to his composition, and not waste three years on

practising technical exercises. Part of Frédéric's letter to Elsner is as follows:

In 1830, though I knew how much I lack and how far I have to go if I am to approach any standard of yours, I still made bold to think: 'At least I shall get a little nearer to him; and if not a Cubit, at least a Spindleshanks may come out of my brain-pan.' [*King Cubit* was the title of an opera of Elsner's, and Spindleshanks was a nickname of an old Polish king – Chopin's legs were also very thin.] But to-day, seeing all such hopes destroyed, I must think of clearing a path for myself in the world as a pianist, putting off till some later time those higher artistic hopes which your letter rightly puts forward. To be a great composer, one must have enormous knowledge, which, as you have taught me, demands not only listening to the works of others, but still more listening to one's own. . . . To my mind, in order to appear before the musical world, a man is fortunate if he is at once a composer and an actor. Here and there in Germany I am known as a pianist; certain musical papers have spoken of my concerts, raising hopes that I shall shortly be seen taking rank among the first *virtuosi* of my instrument. . . . To-day only one possibility offers for the fulfilment of this promise; why should I not seize it? In Germany I could not have learned the piano from anyone; for though there were persons who felt that I still lack something, no one knew what; and I also could not see the beam in my own eye which still prevents my looking higher. Three years are a long time; too long; even Kalkbrenner admits that, now that he has examined more closely; which should convince you that a genuine *virtuoso* of proved worth knows no jealousy. But I would be willing to stick it for three years, if that will only enable me to take a big step forward in what I have undertaken. I understand enough not to become a copy of Kalkbrenner; nothing will interfere with my perhaps overbold but at least not ignoble desire to create a new world for myself; and if I work, it is in order to have a firmer standing. . . . I hope that you will not refuse me your blessing, seeing on what principle I enter upon this undertaking.

Chopin quotes the pianist Ferdinand Ries and the violinist Spohr as being able to have their operas and works produced only because of their fame as concert artists.

This is a very heartfelt letter – one of the few in his younger life – and we must sympathize with the young musician who was fearing to see all his hopes and aspirations ending in smoke. Undoubtedly he was sincere in thinking that this was a chance not to be missed, and probably Kalkbrenner, who, whatever his other accomplishments, was a glib talker and possessed great charm, had encouraged him with flattering and high-sounding encomiums. We know that Chopin did attend the pianoforte classes, though not for long; but what exactly was the reason for discontinuing the lessons it is difficult to discover. Many of his newly formed Parisian friends, including Mendelssohn, Liszt, and Hiller, strongly denounced the idea; for they maintained that Chopin was already a finer pianist than Kalkbrenner. Also, the impression made on the musicians in Paris by the concert in which Chopin made his Parisian début early in the new year must have contributed largely to his altered decision.

The method of this famous teacher achieved pre-eminence over all others for many years, and its influence is still felt in French pianoforte-playing; therefore a short personal description of Kalkbrenner will not be out of place, and will help us to form an opinion of the type of man he must have been. Chopin has to admit that 'Kalkbrenner's person is as much hated as his talent is respected by all and sundry; he does not make friends with every fool'. At this time he was forty-seven, tall, rather stiff, with regular features, a somewhat sarcastic smile, always polite, with an air suggestive of a diplomat. He was unutterably vain, and was for ever boasting of royal honours conferred upon him. Louis Philippe (1773–1850) had in the previous year accepted the throne of France, and was apt to bestow favours rather freely. Kalkbrenner endeavoured to impress upon everyone the fact that he was a fine gentleman, and his pompous gait and ceremonious manner lent colour on occasion to his effect upon the uninitiated. His conceit was unbounded; he was firmly convinced that no pianist could ever aspire to the highest honours without being his disciple. It is obvious that he belonged to the old school, and, as such, could never be popular with the magnificent array of young men with a fresh cause who lived in Paris at that time.

His playing was very sustained, with a beautiful and harmonious legato, and obtained its effects by charm of tone, not by the application of force. It was wonderfully equal in touch, pure rather than warm, being based on finger-work only. To gain this perfect freedom of finger movement, he had invented a *guide-mains* (guide for the hands), i.e. a bar of wood placed parallel to the keyboard, upon which the forearm rested, just above the wrist. This enabled the wrist to be perfectly supple, though in repose, and allowed the fingers to acquire firmness, with fullness and roundness of tone quality.

A practical definition of this method has been handed down to us by Camille Saint-Saëns, who was a lovely exponent of that crystal-clear type of playing so necessary to the correct interpretation of Mozart. I shall never forget the impression his playing of some of Mozart's concertos made upon me; such purity and suavity I have never heard equalled, and yet there was a scintillating brilliance in the louder passages. Saint-Saëns was a kind of grandson of Kalkbrenner in his playing. His teacher was a certain Stamaty, the supposed best pupil of Kalkbrenner, and the recognized authority on his master's method. This is what Saint-Saëns has written:

I also was put upon the régime of the *guide-mains*. It was a bar fixed in front of the keyboard, upon which the forearm rested, in such a fashion as to get rid of all muscular action except that of the hand itself. This system is excellent for forming the young pianist in the execution of works written for the clavecin and for the earliest pianofortes, of which the notes spoke without effort on the player's part, though insufficient for modern works and instruments. It is thus, however, that we should begin developing first firmness of touch and finger, and suppleness of wrist, and adding progressively the weight of the forearm and that of the arm. It was not only strength of finger that one acquired by this method, but also the production of tone-quality by the finger only, a precious expedient that has become rare in our days.

The art of pianoforte-playing has passed through several vicissitudes during the succeeding hundred years, the antithesis of Kalkbrenner's style being the German school, built up by the

followers of Liszt. Franz Liszt was an iconoclast amongst pianists, and played the instrument in his own natural way. He had no wish to form a school, nor did he attempt to do so; but when he definitely gave up the life of a concert pianist in 1847, his few pupils and their adherents set about building up a fashion for hammer-thrashing which for the remaining years of last century spelt doom to all the finer points of the art. No doubt the growth of orchestras, both in volume and size, had a lot to do with this desire for enormous sound, and, as a consequence, pianoforte manufacturers had to make their actions far heavier, which correspondingly made delicate and refined playing a much more difficult achievement. The works of Mozart and his predecessors suffered terribly from this kind of interpretation, and Chopin's poetry was rarely realized; but, latterly, the pendulum has swung back, both players and composers seeking for colour instead of noise, with the manufacturers of the best instruments emulating them, only too glad to popularize the lighter touch.

Kalkbrenner's method has a great deal to be said for it, for the independent training of the fingers should be the foundation of all teaching. How far he went with his wooden bar is a matter I need not discuss here; his fundamental principle, however, was right, and always must be. But I have no hesitation in saying that the subsequent idea, prevalent for so long, of pushing through with the arm, is dying rapidly.

Kalkbrenner was most anxious for Chopin to be his pupil, for he had visions of great advertisement, the only satisfaction for his vanity, and was willing to relax his usual three-year course when he found Chopin growing undecided. But that Chopin was right in his judgement, or at least that his advisers were right, there can be no shadow of doubt, for the minds of the two men and their musical objectives were diametrically opposed. One was all theory and stern training, the other was poetry and natural expression. We have no way of gauging how good a pianist Chopin was, for there is no evidence whatever of his having played any of the great works of other masters: his programmes were confined almost entirely to the exposition of his own compositions and rarely included even his own major works. But that he played his own music mar-

vellously, inimitably, is conclusively proved by the opinions expressed by everyone who heard him. Such wonderful words have never been used so generously and by such musicians and critics over any other pianist. Thalberg, Liszt, and later, Rubinstein, had their enthusiasts, but they had their enemies as well. Chopin appears to have had none.

If Kalkbrenner was generally disliked by his colleagues, he, at least, retained his admiration and friendship for Chopin. The latter dedicated his *E minor Concerto*, Op. 11, to the discarded professor, whilst the former, besides taking part in Chopin's first concert, dedicated one of his innumerable compositions, Op. 120, a set of Variations on Frédéric's *Mazurka in B flat*, Op. 7, No. 1, to the composer of this Mazurka. Perhaps Chopin preferred to remain on friendly terms, for Kalkbrenner was a partner of the firm of Pleyel & Co., the pianoforte makers, and we shall see later how much the Polish pianist was to be indebted to Camille Pleyel and his firm.

Kalkbrenner must have been a 'character', to use a modern slang term. Plebeianism was undoubtedly hateful to his 'refined' nature. Ferdinand Hiller (1811-1885), an estimable musician of all-round ability, who was successful during his lifetime as pianist, conductor and composer, though nowadays almost forgotten, tells of an occasion when he sat with Chopin and Liszt at an outside café on the Boulevard des Italiens. Suddenly they saw the overdressed *maestro* in the distance, head in the air, full of importance; determining to take him down a peg or two, they clustered round him, shouting and gesticulating and generally behaving in a most unseemly manner. To the delight of the three *boulevardiers* Kalkbrenner became self-conscious almost to distraction.

Heinrich Heine, that amazing German Jew who preferred Paris as an arena and the French language as a medium for his wit and sarcasm, was not at all attracted by Kalkbrenner. He described him as 'a mummy who has been dead for many years but who has lately married', and said that he 'looks like a bon-bon that has been in the mud'. Kalkbrenner had a fine brain, and was the founder of a great school; but his mind was that of a schoolmaster, the opposite to that of an artist, poet or musician. Chopin could not have remained his pupil; the music

that was in him was too enveloping to put up with niggardly details; it had to breathe – it could not be bottled up. We can see why he admired the playing of Kalkbrenner. It embodied the elegance and perfection which so typifies most of his own work and which must have reflected his own style of playing – the same characteristics that pleased him in singers; for he was almost as good a judge of a singer as he was of a pianist. John Field (1782–1837), who was born in Dublin but elected to live in St. Petersburg, was considered the most delicate and delicious pianist of his day, although he had not yet appeared in Paris; and Johann Baptist Cramer (1771–1858), born in Mannheim, but living most of his life in London, was then spoken of rather absurdly as the greatest pianist of all time; these two were the chosen models of contemporary players. Chopin had been told that he resembled both of them. This consoled him. After Elsner's letter he decided to go his own way, follow his own inclinations, play in his own fashion. His study must be his composition – his fingers were sufficiently controlled to express his own thoughts, and were quite a satisfactory medium to show off his creations. His mind was made up: he renounced all teachers.

Before proceeding further with the pianistic side of Chopin's early life in Paris and with his first appearances there and his meteoric rise to fame, let us survey the artistic horizon of the day, and try to understand the reasons for the rebellion against all established art-forms. With the coming to the throne of Louis Philippe in 1830, and the quelling of the short Revolution of that year, Paris assumed once again its air of gaiety, and set about establishing itself as the home of European culture. The most talented men in the various spheres of art made it their rendezvous, and, as a result of their meetings and discussions, the new banner of art-expression, Romanticism, was unfurled. The wonderful array of men of genius born in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century has never been equalled, and most probably never will be. If the Napoleonic wars devastated Europe and brought untold misery everywhere, they undoubtedly gave birth, as compensation, to a galaxy, whose efforts have enriched the world's art, and have given us works of beauty and imagination entirely different from those of the

previous centuries of European civilization. One has mildly imagined that the last gigantic Armageddon also may be the father of brilliant offspring, that from the children of to-day a few more geniuses will rise comparable to those wonderful first-magnitude stars of little more than one hundred years ago. The different branches of art require another upheaval to stimulate them and raise them from the rut into which they have fallen. Is it too much to hope for the birth of a genius in each sphere? Great talent that will only proceed with the old order of things will not suffice; genius alone can be triumphant.

Let us examine the names of a few of the leaders of that period in literature, painting and music, who lived in Paris during Chopin's life there. Representing literature we find Victor Hugo, Sainte-Beuve, Balzac, Gautier, Musset, Heine, Chateaubriand, Merimée, Dumas, George Sand, Stendhal, Sandeau, Thierry, Thiers, Guizot, Lamennais, Lamartine, Vigny, Sue, Michelet, Mickiewicz, Niemcewicz. Among the painters are Delacroix, Delaroche, Ingres, Corot, Rousseau, Diaz, Le Brun and Ary Scheffer. The names of the musicians include Berlioz, Liszt, Rossini, Auber, Hiller, Heller, Cherubini, Meyerbeer, Paër, Boieldieu, Hérold, Kalkbrenner, Thalberg, de Bériot, Baillot, Herz, Adam, Franchomme, Halévy, Habeneck, Malibran, Viardot-Garcia, Lablache, Grisi, Rubini, Pasta. When we think that Mendelssohn, Schumann, Wagner and Verdi were born in the early years of the nineteenth century also, we realize that Chopin must have been almost overwhelmed at coming into contact with men of such calibre, knowing that he had to compete with them for laurels.

The whole of intelligent Europe was undergoing a change of outlook, and Paris, being the pivot upon which culture was revolving, besides being strategically important after the Napoleonic *débâcle*, was to be the mainspring for each and every improvement. Fifteen years of Napoleon's belligerent activity had demoralized Europe, had killed countless thousands – men both poor and rich, peasant and noble, ignorant and educated. It was impossible for Europe to accept the standard of life that had been acceptable before that orgy of slaughter. She needed cleansing. With that cleansing came a new vision of thought. As her cities and houses had to be rebuilt, as her commerce had

to be regained, as her politicians had to clutch at new theories for government and diplomacy, so had her art and culture to assume a new perspective. Intelligence demanded that the old order of things should depart, that the view should henceforward be seen through another lens. In art it was no longer possible to rely on rules, laws, theories, formulas – nature demanded representation; too long had she been forgotten. After all, so declared the leaders of the new movement, what is more beautiful than nature, what is truer than life? Away with all systems and teachings. Let our art be simpler and more direct, more sincere – it can then be eternal, everlasting.

Thus was Romanticism ushered into an astonished world which had been brought up entirely on tradition, which could recognize nothing as art that had not been built up on the old classical models. All branches of art suffered the same fate; the new spirit had enveloped the minds of the young painters, writers and musicians, and they readily received the backing and encouragement necessary from the people, who, after all, were their brothers and had the same desire for insurrection. The victory was quick and complete. In literature Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand are generally credited with being the founders of the Romantic movement, though neither can be accounted as belonging to the highest class. Victor Hugo took the reins of leadership, and throughout his long life was more or less the father of the movement. Eugène Delacroix, as the foremost French painter of his time, was looked upon by the members of the new school as their champion, although Paul Delaroche, as professor at the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*, was a powerful rival. Only after the latter's death in 1856 did Delacroix succeed him as a member of the Institute, and the modern school of painting came into its own.

It is much more difficult to define the actual beginning of Romanticism in music. Schumann is usually hailed as the harbinger of the new music, and certainly he deserves the title, but his works had no influence whatsoever on the musical tastes of Paris at the period we are interested in, because none of his pianoforte compositions, which heralded his original talent, could have been known there until some years later. Of the Frenchmen, Berlioz must be given pride of place as the first

Romantic. Born in 1803, he won the *Prix de Rome* in 1830 and returned to Paris towards the end of 1832. Whilst in Italy he met, amongst others, Liszt, and it was the sympathy in outlook between these two men which most influenced the new order of things musically in Paris during the next few years. Both men mixed with the literary giants of the day and were caught up in the intellectual upheaval which was carrying everything before it; it was only natural that they became infected with the spirit of revolt, and that they should gain the urge for freedom and originality. Berlioz exemplified this in his *Symphonie Fantastique*, which, written just over a hundred years ago, is too modern for a great many ears even to-day.

One must not forget the influence of the later Beethoven as being one of the causes of the Romantic movement in music. The works of his third period forecast a great change. He no longer found the old forms sufficient for his expanding ideas, and was continually devising novel methods of self-expression, though he was an excellent disciplinarian, and could never break away entirely from conventional habits. Berlioz is illuminating in his *Mémoires* about the difficulty some of the Parisian musicians had in grasping the meaning of Beethoven in his symphonies, even in obtaining emotional enjoyment from them. Lay members of the audiences must have been even more confounded by Beethoven's complexities. The composers of the older school, headed by Cherubini – men such as Auber, Boieldieu, Paër, Lesueur etc. – were not at all complimentary to Beethoven's greatness, sneered at his supremacy and hinted at the tottering of the German school. Cherubini should not have been so disparaging, because he had the great stuff in him, and was recognized as the doyen of musicians in France. But he had a disgruntled side to his nature, and on occasion gave vent to his spleen, as when he said of Beethoven's later style 'it makes me sneeze'. He was appointed Director of the Conservatoire in 1822, and in 1828, during his tenure of office, the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire* was founded, mainly through the efforts of Habeneck. The concerts of this Society have been an institution ever since, and the chief mainstay of orchestral music in France.

Henri Bidou, in his '*Chopin*', published in 1925, gives the

programmes of the series of seven Conservatoire concerts in the year 1831. Included in the series were performances of the 3rd, 5th, 6th, 7th and 9th Symphonies of Beethoven, with repeat performances of the 5th and 7th, the Overtures to *Fidelio*, *Prometheus* and *King Stephen*, the final scene from *Fidelio*, and the *Septet*. This, only four years after his death, is due homage to the greatest of all composers. Beethoven has always been the most popular composer of the Parisians, whereas his great symphonic successor, Brahms, is still fighting hard for favour in Paris.

But the seeds of Romanticism, sown mainly through the efforts of Berlioz and Liszt, were quickly bearing fruit. The people of Europe were clamouring for a fresh impulse to life. Any new thought or conception was welcomed, as if they desired a completely new existence, the breathing of a different air, the beginning of another culture. It was into this amazing transformation of senses that Chopin intruded in the autumn of 1831, to which he was to yield his whole musical fabric, and of which he became one of the greatest exponents. No one can doubt his Romanticism for a second. Practically all his compositions were inspired effusions, many of them improvisations, and his weakest works will be found to be those wherein he attempted to conform to older forms. The *milieu* into which he was thrust breathed, talked, ate the new thought, and his natural self-expression fitted into the ideals and aspirations of these pioneers just as a foot into a well-made shoe. If any moment were opportune for an original creative musician it was this. The *intelligentsia* were waiting for someone with entirely new sounds, and Chopin was there to produce them.

## CHAPTER IX

### SOWING THE SEEDS

1831-1832

FRÉDÉRIC is still tremendously interested in the tastes and peculiarities of the people who surround him, and particularly in the crowds in the streets. He tells Titus that he has not bought 'one of those little books of etiquette, with lists of congratulations, which girls and boys sell in the streets for two *sous*'. He thinks the people 'queer', and proceeds:

As soon as evening comes you hear nothing but voices calling out the titles of new chapbooks; sometimes you can buy 3, 4 sheets of rubbish for a *sou*. It is: '*L'art de faire les amants, et de les conserver ensuite*', '*Les amours des prêtres*', '*L'archevêque de Paris avec Mme la Duchesse du Barry*', and a thousand other such indecencies, sometimes very wittily written. It is really wonderful to see the methods people hit on here to earn a few pennies. You know that there is great distress here; the exchange is bad, and you can often meet ragged folk with important faces, and sometimes you can hear menacing remarks about the stupid Philippe, who just hangs on by means of his ministers. [Louis-Philippe, the king with great ability and little character, who began so hopefully and ended so disappointingly.]

These were early days for Chopin to express his convictions, but he evidently took some interest in political affairs. Had he only known it, Frédéric owed a lot to this rather English-minded king; for without his advent the social life of Paris would have been exceedingly tame, and many of the brilliant talents would have emigrated to other intellectual centres.

That Chopin had not lost his loyalty to his native land is shown by the following account, which he wrote to Titus, of the reception Paris gave to an Italian general named Ramorino, who had just returned from fighting with the Polish army in its disastrous insurrection against Russia. Ramorino, who was a natural son of the French Marshal Lannes, was born in 1792;

he served under Napoleon, fought for the Piedmontese in their rising of 1821, joined the Polish insurgents, and was finally court-martialled and shot by the Piedmontese in 1849. He lived for fighting, but never proved himself worthy of the honours bestowed upon him. Why the French crowd was so boisterous over him, as Chopin depicts, remains an enigma, unless it was because of the deep sympathy of the French for the Poles in their national aims, and the popularity of everything Polish in France at that moment. Frédéric describes the scene:

Opposite me Ramorino was lodging in the street, in the place called *Cité bergère*, where there is a big courtyard. You doubtless know how the Germans received him everywhere, how in Strasbourg the French harnessed themselves to his carriage; altogether, you know how enthusiastic the masses are about our General. Paris did not want to be behindhand. The School of Medicine, the so-called '*jeune France*', which wears little beards and doubtless has regulations about the fastening of neckties (you must know that here every political party wears them differently – I mean the extremists; the Carlists wear green waistcoats, the Republicans and Napoleonists – that is just '*jeune France*', the Saint Simonists or new christians, who are creating a separate religion, and are also for equality, and have enormous numbers of followers: these wear blue, and so on, and so on). So about a thousand of such young men, with a non-ministerial tri-colour flag, marched through the whole town to welcome Ramorino. Though he was at home he did not want to risk unpleasantness with the government (he is a fool about this), so, in spite of the cries and shouts of '*Vive les polonais*', etc., he would not show himself. His adjutant (probably Dzialynski) came out and said that the General invites them to call on him another day. And the next morning he moved out from there. Two or three days later, an enormous crowd, not only young men this time, but a general crowd, collected in front of the Panthéon and crossed Paris to Ramorino. It increased like a snowball as it passed from street to street, till by the bridge (pont neuf) the mounted men began to disperse it. Many were hurt; nevertheless a large crowd collected on the boulevards, under my windows, joining those who arrived from the other side of the town. The police could do nothing with the surging mass; a detachment of infantry arrived; hussars, mounted mili-

tary police on the pavements; the guard equally zealous, shoving aside the excited and muttering crowd, seizing, arresting free citizens, – nervousness, shops closing, groups of people at all the corners of the boulevards; whistles, galloping messengers, windows crammed with spectators (as at home on Easter Day); and this continued from 11 in the morning till 11 at night. I began to hope that perhaps something would get done; but it all ended with singing of 'Allons enfants de la patrie' by a huge chorus at 11 at night. You will scarcely realize what an impression these menacing voices of an unsatisfied crowd produced on me. The next morning people expected the beginning of a constitution from this *émeute*, as they call it here, – but the idiots are sitting quiet to this day. Only Grenoble has followed Lyons, and the devil knows what is going to happen next.

In a previous letter to Titus Frédéric recounts an amusing contretemps with the pianist Johann Pixis, whom he had already met in Stuttgart: Pixis was then a man of forty-three, and had adopted a German orphan of fifteen, named Francilla, with the intention of marrying her.

I can't refrain from telling you my adventure with Pixis. Imagine, he has a very pretty 15-year-old girl living with him, whom it is said he thinks of marrying and whom I met when I visited him in Stuttgart. Pixis, on arriving here, invited me to call, but did not mention that the girl, whom I had forgotten, had arrived with him. (I might have called sooner, had I known.) He asked me to call, so after a week I went. On the stairs I was pleased to see the young pupil; she asked me in, saying Herr Pixis was out, but it did not matter, come in and rest, he will soon be in, etc. We both feel a little tremulous. Knowing that the old man is jealous, I excuse myself, I will come again, and so on. Meanwhile, as we stand discussing prettily on the stairs in the innocence of our hearts, up comes the little Pixis, looks (in the manner of Soliva) through large spectacles, to see who is on the stairs and talking to his belle, and then, hurrying upstairs, poor fellow, stops in front of me, says brusquely: '*Bon jour,*' and to her: – '*Qu'est-ce que vous faites ici?*' – and a huge jeremiad of German devils at her, for daring to receive young men during his absence. I also (smiling and ignoring everything) upheld Pixis, scolding her for going out so lightly clad, just in her stuff dress, and so on. At last the old

man realized: swallowed, took me by the arm, conducted me into the salon, didn't know where to put me to sit, he was so afraid I should take offence and play some trick on him in his absence, or else murder the pupil. Afterwards he accompanied me downstairs, and seeing that I was still laughing – (I could not hide my amusement at the joke of anybody supposing me *capable de* that sort of thing) – he then went to the concierge to find out when and how I got on the stairs, and so on. From that day Pixis can't say enough in praise of my talent to all the publishers, and especially to Schlesinger, who has engaged me to write something on themes from Robert, which he has bought from Meyerbeer for 24,000 francs! How do you like it? I, as a *séducteur*!

The other side of Chopin's nature is reflected later in the letter of December 25. The moment he is alone we can discern the old melancholy. He wishes his friend were with him, and complains of the misery of having no one to talk intimately to. 'You know how easily I make acquaintances . . . well, I have no end of such acquaintance; and not one with whom I can be sad. In feeling I am always in a state of syncopation with everyone. It torments me, and you would not believe how I long for a pause, to have no one come near me all day long.' Then follows an agonized tirade against Sowinski, another Polish pianist, who used to annoy him in Vienna:

. . . some person in whiskers, huge, tall, superb, – comes in, sits down to the piano and improvises he doesn't know what, bangs and pounds without any meaning, throws himself about, crosses his hands, clatters on one key for five minutes with an enormous thumb that once belonged in the Ukraina, holding the reins or wielding a bailiff's cudgel. Here you have the portrait of Sowinski, who possesses no other merit than a good figure and a good heart. If ever I have seen a clear picture of charlatanism or stupidity in art, it is now, in what I often have to listen to while I am walking about or washing in my room. My ears burn; I could fling him out of doors; but I must spare his feelings, even be affectionate on my side. You can't imagine what it's like; but as people here think a lot of him (they can't see beyond neckties), one has to be chums with him. Most of all he enrages me with his collection of pothouse tunes; sense-

less, vilely accompanied, put together without the slightest knowledge of harmony or prosody, with contredanse cadences; these he calls a collection of Polish songs. You know how I have longed to feel our national music, and to some extent have succeeded in feeling it; – sometimes he gets hold of something of mine, now here, now there; something the beauty of which often depends on the accompaniment; and starts to play it in a tipsy, cackling, pothouse or parish organ style; and there's nothing you can say, because he won't understand anything beyond what he has picked up.

The letter continues in the same strain of hopelessness:

Everything *moderne* has gone out of my head; I turn all the more to you, take you by the hand, and weep. I have had your letter from Lwow; we shall not meet, then, till later; and perhaps not at all, for, seriously, my health is bad. I am gay on the outside, especially among my own folk (I count Poles my own); but inside something gnaws at me; some presentiment, anxiety, dreams – or sleeplessness, – melancholy, indifference, – desire for life, and the next instant, desire for death: some kind of sweet peace, some kind of numbness, absent-mindedness; and sometimes definite memories worry me. My mind is sour, bitter, salt; some hideous jumble of feelings shakes me! I am stupider than ever. My Life, forgive me.

This, on Christmas Day 1831, is the first admission of his poor health since he left Warsaw. His fears were well founded, for actually he and Titus never met again.

Frédéric was still hoodwinking his parents, as a letter from his father which will be quoted shows; but that the malady that killed him was already incipient is obvious. The disease may not as yet have disturbed his peace of mind, but it was surely undermining his system; and this, with his morbid love of loneliness, was beginning to destroy his vitality.

In Frédéric's letters to Poland about this period he is extremely frank about some of his colleagues and contemporaries. At that time, the principal music critic in Paris was the renowned Fétis. As we shall see, he was extraordinarily sanguine about the great gifts of Chopin after his first Paris concert; but he was not treated equally kindly by the pianist. In his letter

to Elsner of December 14 Chopin claims friendship with the esteemed critic and admits that he can learn much from him, but he continues:

. . . he lives outside the town and comes into Paris only for lessons, as otherwise he would long have been in Sainte Pélagie for debts; of which he has more than his *Revue Musicale* brings in. You must know that, according to the law, debtors in Paris can be arrested only in their domicile; so he does not stay in his domicile but goes out of town where the law cannot reach him till after a certain time.

Does this mean that he never could sleep within the city limits, or that there were so many concerts in Paris that he never slept at all? I could understand this happening to a sincere critic during the London concert seasons of to-day.

There was a professor of composition at the Conservatoire, famous in his day, named Anton Reicha, of whom Chopin had a poor opinion:

Reicha I have merely seen; you know how eager I was to meet that man; now I know several of his pupils, who have given me a different impression of him. He does not care for music, does not even attend the Conservatoire concerts [these were not boring student affairs, but public concerts, the best of their kind], does not wish to talk of music with anyone, during his lessons looks continually at his watch; and so on; Cherubini also just babbles of cholera and revolutions. These people are dried-up chrysalises, whom one can only regard with respect, and learn something from their works.

Chopin does not appear to have had much veneration for any of the older musicians, always excepting his beloved old master, Elsner; and this again is proof of his desire for a new expression in music. He was, by nature, just as tired of the old ideas as the people with whom he associated were by adoption.

We have already noticed how interested Chopin has always been in the art of singing. Most pianists, often, alas, with good reason, look upon singers as very poor musicians; for nowadays singing has almost ceased to be an art. When Rossini, Bellini

and Meyerbeer were writing operas, singers had to be able to sing. The success of the opera depended upon the ability of the singers to show off their command of technique, and the music was judged by its opportunity for the display of their agility. The singers of that period have never been surpassed, and one is not very hopeful of ever hearing their equal. Chopin would have made an excellent vocal teacher, if his keen critical sense is any criterion. For the magnificent array of singers who were in Paris at that time he had nothing but praise, and when we consider their names we cannot wonder. He heard Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia* with Lablache, Rubini and Malibran; *Otello* (Rossini) with Rubini, Pasta and Lablache; *L'Italiana in Algeri* with Rubini, Lablache and a Madame Raimbeaux, whose name has not been so remembered through the intervening century.

If ever I had everything at once, it's now, in Paris. You can't conceive what Lablache is like! Pasta is said to have gone off somewhat; but I have seen nothing more exalted. Malibran depends only on her marvellous voice; no one sings like her! Wonderful, wonderful! Rubini is a splendid tenor; takes his notes authentically, not in falsetto, and sometimes sings roulades for two hours together (but sometimes embroiders too much and makes his voice tremble purposely; also he continually trills; which, however, brings him more applause than all else). His *mezza voce* is incomparable. Schröder-Devrient is here; but does not produce such a *furore* as in Germany. Malibran played Othello, and she Desdemona. Malibran is small, and the German woman is huge; it looked as if Desdemona would smother Othello.

Schröder-Devrient was singing at Dresden, and was of monumental assistance to Wagner during his early struggles: she must have been a magnificent actress. Malibran was the daughter of Manuel Garcia, himself a fine singer, whose son, also Manuel, lived for most of his 101 years in London and became the most celebrated singing-teacher of his day. Malibran was born in 1808, made her *début* in London in 1825, and married M. Malibran in 1826. After being divorced she married Charles de Bériot, an outstanding violinist, in 1835, but died the following year in Manchester whilst on tour, never having fully

recovered from the effects of a fall from a horse six months before.

Chopin's letter continues:

Madame Cinti-Damoreau sings as superbly as possible; I prefer her singing to Malibran's. Malibran amazes, Cinti delights, and her chromatic scales are better than those of Toulon the famous flautist. No voice could be more highly trained; it seems to cost her so little to sing, as if she just blew it at the audience. Nourrit, the French tenor, has wonderful feeling! and Cholet, at the Opéra Comique, where they give *Fra Diavolo* [Auber], *La Fiancée* [Auber] and *Zampa* (a fine new opera by Hérold) is the first *amant* here; *séducteur*, tantalizing, marvellous, a genius with the real voice of romance. He has created his own style.

Chopin seems to have been satisfied with the works themselves. Opera always fascinated him, and he probably heard more of it than of any other form of music. He admired Rossini tremendously; Bellini, with his delicate melodic line, became one of his favourite composers; Hérold, Auber and Adam all came in for high praise in his letters; and the innovations of Meyerbeer filled him with wonderment. He described *Robert le Diable* as

a masterpiece of the new school, in which devils (huge choirs) sing through speaking-trumpets, and souls rise from graves (but not, as in *The Charlatan* [opera by the Pole Kurpinski] just in groups of 50 or 60); in which there is a diorama in 'the theatre, in which at the end you see the *intérieur* of a church, the whole church, at Christmas or Easter, lighted up, with monks, and all the congregation on the benches, and censers: — even with the organ, the sound of which on the stage is enchanting and amazing, also it nearly drowns the orchestra; nothing of the sort could be put on anywhere else. Meyerbeer has immortalized himself! But he has spent three years in Paris to get it done; it is said he has paid 20,000 francs to the cast.

Such stage magnificence may well have astonished the Parisians and Europe in general a hundred years ago, and have prepared the way for the elaborate productions of to-day, such as that of the last act of *Die Meistersinger* at Bayreuth, when 800

people are on the stage. That Meyerbeer played an important rôle in the development of opera is certain; but his melodrama and blatancy have ceased to appeal to modern musicians, and in later years Chopin lost much of this admiration.

In his letter to Titus of December 12, 1831, Frédéric writes that his first concert in Paris will take place on the 25th of the same month.

Paganini's famous rival Baillot will play, also Brod, a famous oboist; I give my *F minor* [Concerto], and the B flat major Variations [Don Juan]. . . . I am also to play with Kalkbrenner (on two pianos, with four others accompanying), his *Marche suivie d'une Polonaise*. It is a crazy notion. One pantaleon is huge, belonging to Kalkbrenner; the other, which belongs to me, is a tiny monochord, but resonant, like little *zyrafki* bells [*Zyrafki* is the Polish name for upright pianos, and means 'little giraffe']; and the other four are large, for an orchestra. Hiller, Osborne [G. A. Osborne, English pianist and composer], Stamaty and Sowinski are to play them. . . . Norblin [a Polish 'cellist and professor at the Paris Conservatoire], Vidal [French violinist and conductor], and the famous Urhan, such an alto [viola] as I have never heard, will support me. The tickets are selling. The hardest thing was to get women singers.

Rossini, who was then in great vogue, and was Director of the Italian Opera in Paris, would have been willing to grant permission for one of his singers to take part in the concert; but the sub-director, Robert, did not wish to create a precedent. Chopin then approached Véron, the Director of the *Académie royale*, and was also refused. This M. Véron cannot have been the ideal Opera Intendant, although he retired a rich man. He was the target for one of the sarcastic sallies of Heinrich Heine. In a letter dated 1837 written in the form of an essay for publication in various German papers, and entitled 'Berlioz, Liszt, Chopin', Heine makes one of his brilliant satirical stabs at an obviously unsympathetic figure:

M. Véron had definite principles, the result of his reflections upon art and science; and in the same way that, as apothecary, he discovered an excellent cough mixture, he as director of the

opera invented a preservative against music. That is to say, he had observed in himself that a spectacular piece by Franconi gave him more pleasure than the best opera; he therefore convinced himself that the greater majority of the public was animated by the same feeling; that most people go to the grand opera from custom, and even then only find enjoyment when beautiful decorations, costumes, and dances absorb their attention, so that they hear absolutely nothing of the terrible music.

. . . The great Véron and the great public understood one another: the one knew how to make the music unobtrusive, and under the name of Opera gave only spectacular pieces; the other, the public, could now go with wife and daughters to the Opera as behoved educated people, without being obliged to die of *ennui*. . . . The opera-house filled daily, Franconi was deserted and became bankrupt, and M. Véron is a rich man. The name of Véron will live eternally in the annals of music; he has embellished the temple of the goddess, but the door has been shut upon the goddess herself. Nothing equals the luxury that has taken the upper hand at the Grand Opera; it is now the paradise for all who are hard of hearing.

. . . He is the god of materialism, and his look, devoid of mind, has often pierced my heart like a spear of steel when I have met him: sometimes, even, it has seemed to me as though a swarm of glittering viscous little worms crawled from his eyes.

Chopin could hope for little from such a manager.

The concert, like so many of Chopin's arrangements, did not take place on the prescribed date, December 25. Owing to the difficulty with the Opera managers it was postponed until January 15; then Kalkbrenner was ill, and in the end Frédéric had to wait until February 26, 1832, for his long-looked-for Paris appearance. Meantime, on February 24, he received the following letter from his father:

MY DEAR CHILD, —

The obstacles that you are meeting and the difficulties you have to contend with in order to give a concert trouble us all the more, since you are irritated by so many things that have to be done, and do not get enough rest. Also, the result can only be expenses which in the end must embarrass you. This worries me, especially as you no longer speak of the lessons that M. Kalkbrenner was to procure for you. I have no doubt that the

acquaintances you make every day by going into distinguished society will be useful to you, and will help to make your talent known; but if by misfortune you should come to be in need, believe me, your art will languish because your spirit is less free. I do not hide from you the fact that this worries me, and you would give me great pleasure if you could reassure me on this point. According to your last letter, your concert should take place on the 26th of this month. Please God you may succeed; but I admit that I am afraid that all these delays will lead to nothing. But as the date is not far from that of your birthday, for which I wish you every happiness and embrace you with all my heart, perhaps this time will be more favourable than others.

As for ourselves, we have bread and we are bearing up, and enjoying quite good health; as for your health, I am happy to hear that you are thought to be looking better than before. Once again your mother and I press you to our hearts.

Chopin had managed to collect two singers, Mlles Isambert and Toméoni, when the concert finally took place. The programme was as follows:

1. Quintet for Strings (2 Violins, Viola and 2 'Cellos),  
Op. 29 Beethoven  
(MM. Baillot, Vidal, Urhan, Tilmant and Norb-  
lin)
2. Duet  
(Mlles Toméoni and Isambert)
3. Concerto in F minor, Op. 21 Chopin
4. Aria  
(Mlle Toméoni)
5. Grand Polonaise, with Introduction and March,  
for 6 Pianofortes Kalkbrenner  
(MM. Kalkbrenner, Chopin, Hiller, Osborne,  
Stamaty and Sowinski)
6. Aria  
(Mlle Isambert)
7. Oboe Solo  
(M. Brod)
8. 'La ci darem' Variations from Mozart's *Don Juan*  
Chopin

It sounds a long programme, and there is no mention of an orchestra, which was obviously out of the question, nor even of a second pianoforte for the Concerto and the Variations. Financially the concert, which was held in Pleyel's concert-room, was a failure, and the receipts did not nearly approximate the expenses. As was to be expected, only the Poles residing in Paris bought tickets. Assisting artists never draw at recitals, and Kalkbrenner and his company were valueless as attractions. Mendelssohn, however, was present, and was especially enthusiastic; while Hiller, in a subsequent letter, says that although most of the leading musicians of Paris were there, he heard no mention of Chopin's lack of technique – an obvious tilt at Kalkbrenner. Liszt, who was sitting in the front row, writes in his book on Chopin:

We remember the first time he appeared in the Pleyel salons, where the most enthusiastic applause, again and again renewed, scarcely sufficed to express our enchantment by the genius which had brought out new phases of poetic feeling, and made such bold and yet such happy innovations in the form of musical art.

The opinions of Fétis have often been questioned, and he has been dubbed prosaic and self-opinionated; but that he was absolutely right in his judgement of Chopin and in his foretelling of the influence that Chopin would have on the pianoforte music of the future can be seen by the following able criticism, which appeared in the *Revue musicale* of March 3, 1832:

To say nowadays of a pianist that he has plenty of talent, or even, if one will, a great talent, is to give the impression that he emulates or is the rival of artists of the first rank whose names spring at once into one's mind: to add that his music is very good leads to the supposition that its merit is analogous with that of the works of Hummel and of a small number of renowned composers; but by these eulogies it is difficult to give any idea of novelty or of originality, because, with the exception of certain nuances of style and ability of workmanship, the music of pianists is generally written in conventional forms that can be considered basic, and that have been continually repro-

duced for more than thirty years. The fault is one of style, and our cleverest artists have been unable to get rid of it in their works. But here is a young man who, abandoning himself to his natural impressions and taking no model, has found, if not a complete resuscitation of pianoforte music, at least a part of that which has been vainly sought for a long time, that is to say an abundance of original ideas of which the type is nowhere to be found. This is not to say that M. Chopin is endowed with the power of a Beethoven, nor that one finds in his music the strength of conception that is so remarkable in that great man. Beethoven has written music for the piano, but I speak here of music for pianists, and in this sphere I find, in the inspirations of M. Chopin, the indication of an alteration of form which in the future may exercise a considerable influence upon this branch of art.

At the concert which he gave on the 26th of this month in the salons of MM. Pleyel & Cie., M. Chopin played a Concerto which astonished as much as it pleased his audience, both by the novelty of the melodic ideas and by the outlines, the modulations, and the general arrangement of the movements. There is soul in his melodies, fantasy in his figuration, and originality in everything. Too much richness of modulation, a lack of order in the linking of phrases, so that one seems at times to be listening to an improvisation rather than to written music – such are the defects that mingle with the qualities already mentioned. But these defects are due to the age of the artist: they will disappear when experience has been gained. If the subsequent works of M. Chopin fulfil the promise of his début, one cannot doubt that he will make a brilliant and well-merited reputation.

As an executant this young artist also deserves praise. His playing is elegant, facile, graceful, and has brilliance and clarity. He brings little tone out of the instrument, and in this resembles most German pianists.

From these opinions of two such authorities as Liszt and Fétis we can conclude that Chopin had made a deep impression, both by his intimate style of playing and by the originality of pianistic effects in his compositions.

In less than three months, on May 20, he made his second appearance in Paris. The Prince de la Moskowa was arranging a charity concert for the poor, and asked Frédéric to play. He

chose the first movement of his *F minor Concerto*, but though the public received him well the *Revue musicale* was this time less pleased, commenting on the smallness of his tone. Nevertheless the concert served Chopin well. The audience was a fashionable one, not, as at his own recital, composed only of Poles and musicians; and from the favourable impression he made that afternoon dates his social success.

## CHAPTER X

### RECOGNITION

1832-1834

CHOPIN was keenly disappointed with his début in Paris. His finances could not possibly hold out much longer, and he could see no chance of earning anything to help them. To ask for money from his father was beyond his imagination, for he knew he had been a drain on the family's resources all his life. At no time had he been self-supporting, for practically the only money he had ever gained was from the last two concerts in Warsaw. He kept asking himself what was to be done, how he was going to start, how he could win fame either as composer or as pianist; but the more he thought the more he was convinced that Europe was impossible. His talent would never be recognized, for the public preferred glitter and glamour to poetry and restraint. There seemed only one way out — emigration to America. At least he would be well paid there for lessons, which would enable him to live, though he knew that his art, his life, his sensitiveness would be damaged if not ruined. America has that effect on successful artists; they cannot withstand the quick accumulation of wealth, nor do they appear impervious to the adulation which is thrust upon them at every turn. Yet Frédéric was convinced that America was to be his fate.

He wrote to his parents that he had decided to cross the high seas at once. He had already threatened them with his project, and they protested in alarm that he was not to hazard such a venture. They suggested his staying in Paris a little longer, and when and if his patience was exhausted, returning to Warsaw. This latter alternative did not appeal to Frédéric at all. His hatred for the Russians had always been an obsession, and now that they had conquered Poland and were its ruthless governors, he could not bear the thought of becoming a serf, and of his art being at their mercy. No! His decision was irrevocable; he would join up with several of his countrymen,

who were exiles like himself in France, and try for fortune in the other hemisphere.

Niecks rather pours cold water on this story as recounted by Karasowski, but only because the older biographer, who was not always reliable and was often given to romancing, maintained that Liszt, Hiller and Sowinski dissuaded Chopin from running such a risk. Niecks says that he was told by Liszt and Hiller 'that they knew nothing of Chopin having had any such intention'. Chopin himself was perhaps intuitively grateful for at least this one of the many indecisions in his life.

But what changed his plans, and marked the turning-point of his career, was a casual meeting with a friend one afternoon whilst walking on one of the *grands boulevards*. This was a memorable moment, and to this friend, Prince Valentin Radziwill, Chopin was always grateful. The Prince would not hear of the young artist's intention of disappearing to America, and, realizing that the gentle persuasion of speech would have no effect on the disillusioned pianist, prevailed upon Frédéric to go with him to a *soirée* at the house of Baron de Rothschild. Of course the invitation was accepted, for Chopin knew that he would meet distinguished people there, among them probably some of the Polish nobility. He was by nature a snob, and loved the society and splendour of the rich, and, as we have already seen, had always been accepted and flattered by them. Since his arrival in Paris he had not sought their company, which must appear strange; but when we consider how much he had suffered mentally over his country's downfall, how disappointed he was at the lack of support given by the French to Poland, how little respect he wished to show towards the powerful Poles who had deserted their country and exiled themselves in France, we shall more readily understand his stand-offish attitude. Here, however, was an opportunity which he could not afford to lose.

Baroness de Rothschild asked her unexpected guest to play. His success was beyond his dreams. The intimacy of his music, his refined style of playing, his elegant manners all made an instantaneous impression. The ladies were charmed with him, and begged to hear him again, some of them there and then demanding to know if he would give them lessons. Four of the

guests agreed to become his protectors – the Maréchale Lannes, the Princesse de Vaudemont, Count Apponyi and Prince Adam Czartoryski. The following day he had more requests for pupils; his financial position was secure.' It was one of those moments in a man's life – a kind of trick that fate will play, though very rarely – that must be seized; and Frédéric, whether from desire or necessity, did not fail to grasp it firmly. This happened in the spring of 1832, and for the next ten years he was free from monetary troubles. He became famous, first of all as a pianist, then, much more to his own satisfaction, as a composer. Many of his finest creations date from this period of success and recognition; and though we shall find him disconsolate and unhappy at times, for he could not alter his nature as easily as his means, mentally he was conscious of an attainment that he had almost given up hope of ever securing. His fee was fixed for him by his aristocratic friends at twenty francs a lesson, which in those days was considered high pay; and by the end of the year he had as many pupils as he needed.

Unfortunately we have no more letters from Frédéric to his family, or to Elsner, or to Titus, or to any of the intimate Polish friends to whom he expressed his real self about this time, so that it is rather difficult to describe his life for the first two or three years in Paris. We know of his appearances there, and of certain of his habits and friendships, but his thoughts cannot so easily be reflected without those curiously put together epistles which, in their very weaknesses, portray his character so vividly. On the 19th of September, 1863, some bombs were thrown from a fourth-story window in a street in Warsaw whilst the Russian General Berg and some soldiers were passing by. This general had succeeded the Grand Duke Constantine as Governor of Poland. None of the soldiers was killed, nor was the general even hit, the only damage being the wounding of two of the horses; but the hatred between the two peoples was such that retaliatory measures were at once taken. These measures meant the turning out of two houses, that of Count Zamoyski, a window of which had been used by the bomb-throwers and in which Chopin's married sister, Isabella Barcinska, occupied the second floor, and the house next door. The women were bundled out into the street, the men taken to the

citadel, whilst the soldiers ransacked the houses. Articles of furniture, clothes, books, manuscripts, letters – all were treated as rubbish and thrown out of the window. Even Chopin's boyhood pianoforte – made by Bucholtz – was flung into the street. In the evening the débris was collected by the Russian soldiers, stacked up in a heap, set on fire and destroyed. Included in this conflagration were Frédéric's letters to his parents, and possibly others to his dearest friends which were being collected by his sister, besides various effects of Chopin himself, dating from his Paris days, which had been bought by his Scottish pupil, Miss Stirling, and sent to Warsaw to be the foundation of a Chopin museum. All these treasures, so beloved by Chopin during his life in Paris, were destroyed; but much as we may deplore the loss of them on sentimental grounds, it does not compare with the burning of the letters; for these would have enabled us to know accurately his doings during those struggling first years in Paris, and would have allowed us to picture him more truly instead of relying on conjecture.

It was at about the end of 1831 that Frédéric heard of the marriage of his 'ideal', Constantia, to Joseph Grabowski. The blow must have been a sad one, but again we have to surmise the effect it made, for we have no exact details. It was Chopin's sister, Isabella, who broke the news, adding in the letter: 'Like you I marvel that anyone could be so callous. It is easy to see that a fine château was a greater attraction. She had feeling only in her singing.' This is the only inkling we are given that the family knew of his attachment. Frédéric, most probably, felt his pride more hurt than his heart. He had outgrown his first love, and his new women-friends, particularly the countesses, were to make him forget it more quickly. In his letter to Titus on December 12, 1831, he mentions Constantia for the last time. 'Miss Gladkowska has married Grabowski, but that does not preclude platonic affections.' This does not sound like a broken heart.

He tells Titus in another letter of a pretty woman who is living on the floor below, with whom he has at various times exchanged glances and words of greeting, but who has now invited him to come and talk with her over the fireside. She declared her love for music and the excited pleasure with which

she listened to his lovely sounds, but his shyness and lack of courage prevented his acceptance of her invitation. He preferred the chilliness of his lonely room to the possibility of a returning husband.

Obviously Frédéric was not averse from a flirtation, but the few that have been recorded so far have been of the mildest. Throughout his life he succumbed quite often to the attractions of a pretty woman, if we are to believe the repeated assertions of George Sand, though it is difficult to prove to what extent he was fascinated. We are left in doubt as to how far, below his outward exterior of femininity, beat a masculine pulse which could on occasions be roused to assert itself.

One letter of Chopin's has been saved for us, to an old school-fellow, Dominik Dziewanowski. It is undated. Scharlitt and Opienski both give the year as 1832, but Niecks maintains that it could not have been written before the second week of January, 1833, because of the allusion to the Princess Vaudemont, of whom there was a memoir in the *Moniteur* of January 6, 1833. Dominik was the boy with whom Frédéric had killed horse-flies at Szafarnia in 1825, and after many apologies for his long silence he proceeds as follows:

I have got into the highest society; I sit with ambassadors, princes, ministers; and even don't know how it came about, because I did not try for it. It is a most necessary thing for me, because good taste is supposed to depend on it. At once you have a bigger talent if you have been heard at the English or Austrian embassy; you play better if princess Vaudemont (the last of the old Montmorency family) was your protector; — I can't say *is*, because the woman died a week ago. She was a lady rather like poor Zielonkowa, or the chatelaine Polanecka; the court used to visit her, she did a lot of good, she hid many aristocrats during the first revolution. She was the first person to present herself at Louis-Philippe's court after the July days. She was surrounded by a multitude of little black and white dogs, canaries, parrots; and also possessed the most amusing monkey in the whole of the great world here, which at evening receptions would bite . . . other countesses.

Though this is only my first year among the artists here, I have their friendship and respect. One proof of respect is that

even people with huge reputations dedicate their compositions to me before I do so to them: Pixis has inscribed to me his last Variations with a military band; also, people compose variations on my themes. Kalkbrenner has used my mazurka [Op. 7, No. 1] in this way; the pupils of the Conservatoire, Moscheles's pupils, those of Herz and Kalkbrenner, – in a word, finished artists, take lessons from me and couple my name with that of Field. In short, if I were still stupider than I am, I should think myself at the apex of my career; yet I know how much I still lack, to reach perfection; I see it the more clearly now that I live only among first-rank artists and know what each one of them lacks.

But I am ashamed of all this bosh that I have written; I have been boasting like a child; like a man who makes haste to defend himself when his cap is on fire. I would scratch it out, but have no time to write another sheet; anyhow, perhaps you have not forgotten what my character is like; if so, you will remember that I am today what I was yesterday: with this difference, that I have only one whisker; the other refuses and still refuses to grow.

I have five lessons to give to-day; you think I am making a fortune? Carriages and white gloves cost more, and without them one would not be in good taste.

I love the Carlists, I can't endure the Philippists, myself I am a revolutionist; also I care nothing for money, only for friendship, for which I beg and pray you.

Frédéric sounds happy in his new surroundings. The horizon has changed, his prospects are clear, and he has attained a degree of self-confidence that has so far been lacking. The passage about his whiskers is interesting: the recalcitrant one never did grow. There seems no reason why the whisker that remained was not shaved off, unless it hid some blemish.

He appears delighted that his name has been joined with that of John Field; for the Irishman, who preferred to live in St. Petersburg, where he was Professor at the Conservatoire, was just then being acclaimed as the first pianist in Europe. Fétis wrote of him in an article in the *Revue musicale* of December 29, 1832, as follows:

Whoever has not heard this great pianist cannot form an idea of the admirable mechanism of his fingers, a mechanism

such that the greatest difficulties seem perfectly simple; his hand does not appear to move. . . . An enthusiasm impossible to describe, a veritable delirium, was manifested by the public at the hearing of his charming concerto, played with a perfection of finish, of precision, of clearness, and of expression, which would be impossible to surpass, and which very few pianists could equal.

The date of this criticism is an additional reason for agreeing with Niecks as to the letter to Dominik having been written in 1833.

Marmontel (a pianist, not the eighteenth-century author) describes Field as of the type of Falstaff. He was gross and fat, smoked without ceasing and was surrounded by beer-glasses and all kinds of bottles. It is difficult to envisage this coarse-looking man being the possessor of such a delicate touch and the composer of such delicious trifles as his eighteen nocturnes, of which form of pianoforte piece he was the inventor. Field did not have a very high opinion of Chopin. He spoke of Chopin's ability as 'a sick-room talent'. Field's first appearance in Paris had been eagerly anticipated. His fame had been long heralded, for critics in other lands had spoken of him as a pianist without a peer. Chopin knew some of the nocturnes and the *A flat Concerto*, both of which he played frequently. The concerto is a good work, as well worth public performance as either of the Chopin concertos, but it has sunk into oblivion. Technically it makes an excellent study, but Field's name is almost forgotten, and students have no inclination to waste their time over it. Such is enduring fame!

As we have seen, Fétis was enthusiastic in his criticism of Field's first Paris recital, but he was only lukewarm after the second. He still admired his refinement of touch and singing tone, but quibbled at his lack of power in comparison with more modern pianists. Evidently virtuosos like Liszt and Thalberg were influencing the trend of current criticism. Liszt has written a eulogistic introduction to an edition of Field's nocturnes, but he was always carefully polite and amiable towards his colleagues. Marmontel hailed Field as Chopin's prototype, both in the style of his playing and in the lyrical beauty of his salon pieces; but, though there is a resemblance in the delicate

fragrance of the nocturnes, this assertion has little value now. The power, the vigour, the passion, the yearning which abounds in Chopin are nowhere to be found in any page of the Irishman's music. Chopin may have been a weakling, he may have appeared effeminate, his playing may have been at times too gentle; but no one can accuse him of fearing to express his lack of tranquillity in his compositions. Both pianists had one thing in common in their playing, absolute equality of touch because of the freedom of their finger movement; but there their similarity ended. Chopin was a poet and lived for colour, Field was mainly a mechanician and relied on a level poise.

Ignaz Moscheles, who was at that time a Professor in London, has left in his diary an account of a dinner that he and Field had in London together. Field had been giving concerts, with a fair measure of success, but Moscheles, whilst admiring his legato touch, found a lack of spirit and depth of emotion in his playing, even thinking it without light and shade. As a man, Moscheles found Field pleasant and good company, amusing but coarse, and not particularly cultured. Moscheles was a sound judge and his opinion can be valued. Besides being a concert pianist he was principal professor of the pianoforte at the Royal Academy of Music and conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Society's concerts for several seasons.

Field was not always temperate in his habits, and was well known to fall asleep during his lessons. His laziness was a by-word, and he was sartorially careless to a degree. On one occasion four young pianists presented themselves to him with an introductory letter. He was amiable and polite though not perfectly sober, but he played to them studies by Cramer and Clementi. How odd this choice sounds to our ears! Pianists did not play Mozart or Haydn; Bach had to wait some years until Mendelssohn unearthed many of his works and made him fashionable up to a point; Beethoven had not been dead long enough, or was too noisy or too difficult; so only the scanty effusions of contemporary pianist-composers were heard. What a field for Chopin and Liszt to get loose in, what a harvest in Germany for the Romantic Schumann!

John Field's chief claim to fame is the comparison which has been made between him and Chopin, and the opinion, so

false, but current for so long, that without Field, Chopin would never have conceived his long right-hand melodic line with flowing left-hand accompaniment. Directly the falsity of this was laid bare, Field's fame began to totter, and now it has almost vanished.

Ferdinand Hiller was one of the musicians better known to posterity with whom Chopin became friendly. Frédéric tells Titus in his letter of December 12, 1831, that 'Hiller is an immensely talented fellow (a former pupil of Hummel) whose concerto and symphony produced a great effect three days ago; he's on the same lines as Beethoven, but a man full of poetry, fire and spirit'.

One does not hear any of the orchestral works of Hiller nowadays, and the concerto is relegated to the class-rooms of the older professors. Hiller must have been of a friendly disposition, jolly and without the petty jealousies of musicians in general, and was probably an excellent companion for the doleful Pole.

There is a fragment of a letter written to Hiller on August 2, 1832, in French, after he had gone to Germany. The beginning of the letter has been lost; its purpose was to introduce a certain Mr. Johns, 'a distinguished amateur from New Orleans', to whom Chopin dedicated the *Five Mazurkas*, Op. 7, published in December 1832. The letter proceeds:

Your Trios, my dear fellow, have long been finished; and, being a greedy person, I have swallowed your manuscripts into my repertory; your Concerto will be performed this month at the Conservatoire contest by Adam's pupils; Mlle Lyon plays it very well.

*La Tentation*, an opera-ballet by Halévy and Gide, has tempted no one of good taste, for it is as little interesting as your Germanic diet is in unison with the spirit of this century.

Maurice [Schlesinger], who has returned from London, where he went for the staging of *Robert le Diable* (which had no success), assured us that Moscheles and Field are coming to Paris for the winter; that is all the news I have to give you – Osborne has been in London for two months. Pixis is at Boulogne. Kalkbrenner is at Meudon; Rossini at Bordeaux. All

those who know you await you with open arms. Liszt is to write you two lines at the end of this sheet. Goodbye, dear friend,

Most heartily yours,

F. CHOPIN.

A letter from Frédéric to his new brother-in-law, Kalasanty Jedrzeiewicz, congratulating him on his marriage to Louise, is dated September 10, 1832:

MY VERY DEAR LIFE!

Forgive my sending this scrawl in answer to your nice letter; but you have given me the right to treat you with even more sincerity than before, so I know you won't mind about the paper. You tell me the news I longed for! I have always been fond of you, have always felt as a friend to you, and be assured that you will now find in me the person you ought to find. I would give half my life to be able to embrace you both on your wedding day and see you at the altar; but that cannot be; I can only send you, as you ask, a polonaise and a mazurka, so that you can hop about and be really gay and that your souls may rejoice. I will not enlarge upon either your heart or hers, for that is not a brother's part; but you cannot believe how it worried me that this hung fire for so long, or how glad I am that it is to happen at last. May all go well with you. The sight of your happiness will make our whole family happy; it is the beginning of good years after the long chain of misfortunes. I press your hand and embrace you. Love me.

Your most sincere

FRYC.

P.S. My life, once more, forgive my not writing a long letter. Perhaps I sin in the hope of pardon, but we know each other not from today or yesterday. Once again, love me as I love you.

His father wrote to Frédéric at about the same time, and the letters may have crossed, for the journey from Warsaw to Paris was a matter of three weeks. After congratulating Frédéric on meeting and mixing with the best artists of the day, Nicolas continues:

Your resolve to publish your works is very necessary, for many people hear you spoken of, without being able to know

your compositions, and, to tell the truth, your works should precede you everywhere you wish to go. Moreover, the profit should provide a little fund, with which you should be able to realize your wish to go next spring to England, where your works will already have reached. No doubt you will profit by the fact that your admirers are so well-disposed towards you, and give a concert that may be both brilliant and advantageous; you must strike while you can, and while the iron is hot.

Nicolas goes on to say that he is getting old, and he thanks Providence for having given him children who can make their own way in the world.

Your sister is going to be married; when you receive this letter, she will doubtless be married already. May God give her happiness! Your mother – you know her fondness – does all that can be done in our situation to see that your sister has everything that is necessary. The union will take place where you were baptized, which pleases me very much, though I do not much like the idea of the short journey at this time of the year; still, your mother will be spared a lot of embarrassment, because here, in order not to annoy anyone, we would have to invite many acquaintances, and one could not entertain them with a glass of water. Well, my child, now you are all dispersed. Only Isabella remains at home, but you will always be all together in the paternal and maternal hearts.

These two letters are abundant proof of the deep affection with which the Chopin family was bound. They were all wrapped up in one another's pleasures and pains, and expressed their love with a certain naive exuberance. Nicolas' letter shows us how blessed Frédéric was to have such a wise father, whose counsel was always of the best and whose strong and clear judgement was both beneficial and necessary to the indeterminate son.

Ferdinand Hiller asked both Liszt and Chopin to join him in a movement of Bach's Concerto for three pianofortes at a concert in Paris on December 15, 1833 (not 1832, as Niecks makes out). The only comment upon this concert is given by Niecks, though he does not mention the source: the piece was played

'with an understanding of its meaning and with perfect delicacy'. But why only one movement? The audiences one hundred years ago did not relish whole symphonies or concertos. Artists and conductors were forced to dole the works out in bits. What would they have said to Wagner's huge conceptions? What did they say to his *Tannhäuser* twenty years later?

At the beginning of 1833 Chopin played at a dramatic entertainment got up for the benefit of Miss Smithson, the Irish actress who was soon to become the wife of Hector Berlioz, and who had been financially unsuccessful in some theatrical productions in Paris. Chopin played during one *entr'acte*, and Liszt during the other. On April 3 he again played with Liszt at a concert arranged by the brothers Herz, the more famous Henry and his brother Jacques, the four artists playing two-pianoforte duets for eight hands. Mention is made of two or three other private appearances, but they are of minute importance. What is important is the fact that Chopin was becoming known in his adopted city, and no longer had occasion to feel rejected. He never had a big public, but he never wanted it. His thoughts were for his compositions, but like most composers, he was not blessed with this world's goods, and had to find means to live. The reputation he was gradually building up ensured his livelihood – that was all he cared about. These concerts may not have enhanced his reputation, but they were primarily social events, and therein lay his bread and butter.

By the beginning of 1833 Chopin had moved from his first address, and was now installed in furnished rooms at 4, Cité Berrière. Here Berlioz took Ernest Legouvé to see him. Legouvé was a dramatist and wrote a book of reminiscences entitled *Soixante ans de Souvenirs*. Speaking of Berlioz he says:

I owe him another great musical joy. One evening he comes to see me; 'Come,' he says, 'I'll take you to see something you've never seen, and somebody whom you will not forget.' We go up to the second floor of a small apartment house, and I find before me a pale young man, sad, elegant, with a slight foreign accent, brown eyes of an incomparable limpid gentleness, chestnut hair, nearly as long as that of Berlioz, and like his, falling over his forehead. 'My dear Chopin, let me present to you my friend Legouvé.' It was indeed Chopin. . . . I cannot define Chopin

better than by saying that he was *une trinité charmante*. There was between his personality, his playing and his compositions, such accord that it was no more possible to separate them than if they had been features of the same face. . . . He made upon me the effect of a natural son of Weber and a Duchess; what I have called his three selves formed one being.

Orlowski, a fellow-student in Warsaw, and a violinist, pianist and composer, wrote to some friends in Poland:

Chopin is well and vigorous; he turns the heads of all the women, the men are jealous. He is *à la mode*. Doubtless we shall soon be wearing gloves *à la Chopin*. Only he is consumed by homesickness.

Liszt writes of Chopin in his explosive way:

The combined effect of his personality was harmonious, and did not call for any special comment. His blue eyes [a terrible mistake, for they were undeniably brown] were more spiritual than dreamy, and his bland smile never writhed into bitterness. The transparent delicacy of his complexion pleased the eye, his fair hair was soft and silky, and his nose slightly aquiline; and his bearing was so distinguished and his manners were stamped with so much high breeding, that he was involuntarily always treated *en prince*. His gestures were numerous and full of grace; his voice was in tone somewhat veiled, often stifled; he was of low stature, and his limbs were but slight. – In society his manners possessed that serenity of mood which distinguishes those whom no *ennui* can annoy because they look for no interest. He was usually gay; his caustic spirit quickly appreciated the ridiculous, and he caught it far below the surface where it usually strikes the eye. – His gaiety was the more piquant seeing that he always kept it within the limits of perfect good taste, and held at a suspicious distance everything that could wound the most fastidious delicacy. He was never known, even in moments of the greatest familiarity, to make use of an inelegant word, and improper merriment or coarse jesting would have been repulsive to him.

The following year one of Chopin's boyhood friends, Jan Matuszynski, came to Paris and accepted a post as Professor at

the *Ecole de Médecine*. He had formerly served as a surgeon-major in the Polish army. Some of Chopin's letters to Jan have already been quoted, but one from Jan to a relative in Warsaw is interesting, as it adds to our picture of Chopin.

The first thing I did on my arrival in Paris was to seek out Frédéric, and I cannot describe to you what a pleasure it was to us both to meet again after five years. He has grown so strong and big that I scarcely knew him again. Chopin is the first pianist in Paris and gives a great number of lessons, none for less than twenty francs. I am living with him at 5, Rue Chaussée d'Antin.

It is pleasing to hear that Chopin has developed so well physically, but one is tempted to think that this cheering letter is primarily for home consumption.

There is a joint letter written principally by Liszt and Chopin, with a few additions by Franchomme, to Hiller, as a token of sympathy on the death of his father. The following quotation will help us to understand the terms of friendship that existed between the two great pianists.

I write to you without knowing what my pen is scribbling, because at this moment Liszt is playing my *études* [the first set, Op. 10, which are dedicated to Liszt] and transporting me outside of my respectable thoughts. I should like to steal from him the way to play my own *études*.

A little further on Liszt and Chopin write in alternate phrases. Liszt's interpolations are enclosed in brackets.

(Do you know Chopin's marvellous *études*?) They are admirable – and all the same they will live only till the moment when yours appear (Author's modesty!!!) A little impertinence on the part of the director – for, to explain to you better, he is correcting my mistakes in spelling, according to M. Marlet's method.

In a postscript Chopin mentions Heine for the first time; he has asked Chopin to greet Hiller '*herzlich und herzlich*'.

Professor Niecks knew Ferdinand Hiller quite well, and therefore had several anecdotes at first-hand. To him we are indebted for the following story. At the house of Countess Plater, a Polish lady, who was renowned as a hostess and for her musical *soirées*, Chopin had an argument with Liszt and Hiller over the interpretation of Polish music. The Pole quite naturally asserted that only a Pole could truly understand the lilt and gaiety, the charm and sadness of the national music of Poland. The other two disagreed, for both the Hungarian and the German imagined their talent sufficient to embrace the music of any nation. To settle the argument it was decided that each should play in turn the well-known mazurka 'Poland is not lost yet'. Liszt began, Hiller followed, but when Chopin had finished the other two had to admit that his conception had alone realized the peculiar essence of the Polish idiom.

Niecks quotes the following remark, made by Countess Plater: 'If I were young and pretty, my little Chopin, I would take you for a husband, Hiller for a friend and Liszt for a lover.'

A letter to Franchomme, dated September 14 to 18, 1833, is mainly a 'thank-you' letter for a stay Chopin had made with his 'cellist friend in Touraine. He asks Franchomme to tell the whole household that he will never forget his visit -

that so much kindness leaves eternal gratitude. People say I have grown fatter and look well, and I feel splendid, thanks to my dinner neighbours who took really maternal care of me. When I think of it, it all seems to me a dream, such a pleasant one that I wish I were still asleep.

The sincerity of his gratitude is proved by the last letter Chopin ever wrote, in which he asked Franchomme, who was again in Touraine, to greet the same kind friends, M. and Mme Forest. He sends messages from Hiller, Schlesinger (the publisher), Paër, and two new acquaintances, the corpulent Dr. Hoffman, a *littérateur*, and the slender Léon Smitkowski, a recruit to the growing band of Chopin's Polish adherents.

This letter was written from Chopin's new address, 5, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin, lodgings which had been previously occupied by a German, Dr. Hermann Franck, the friend of

Mendelssohn and other well-known musicians. Dr. Franck was a learned man, scientist, man of letters, and editor for a short while of the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*; and Mendelssohn in his letters refers to games of chess that he played with Franck on his Parisian visits. These rooms were furnished with much greater luxury – a necessity in view of Chopin's aristocratic pupils and the growing circle of his illustrious friends. He was now earning enough money to be able to satisfy his expensive tastes – clothes from smart tailors, gloves in great quantities (one of his lifelong peculiarities), the hiring of vehicles to take him everywhere in style, and the entertaining to dinner and supper of his newly acquired friends. His dandyism, a factor in his appearance soon recognized and always characteristic, was allowed free rein. He was evidently disregarding the advice of his father, contained in a letter of April 13, 1833, in which Nicolas wrote:

I shall not cease to repeat to you, that until you have tried to set aside a couple of thousand francs, I shall look upon you as one to be much pitied in spite of your talent and the flattering compliments you receive. God guard you from any indisposition or illness that would interrupt your lessons; you would be reduced to misery in a foreign country. This thought, I admit, often torments me, because I see that you live from hand to mouth, and that you are not able to make, at your own expense, the smallest journey, even in the country you are living in. You spoke of going to England; but with what, in that country where the cost of living is excessive? If this goes on, you will remain a Parisian for ever. Do not think I want you to be avaricious, no, but less indifferent to the future.

Chopin's style of living, however, and his social success, were neither the chief nor the most lasting reasons for his becoming an important figure in the musical life of Paris. Until his arrival in France almost nothing was known of his compositions in the outside world. Only three of his works had been published – the *Rondo*, Op. 1, in 1825 by Brzezina in Warsaw, the '*La ci darem*' *Variations*, Op. 2, in 1830 by Haslinger in Vienna, and the *Rondo à la Mazur*, Op. 5, in 1827, also by Brzezina: so that he was only known as a composer amongst his own friends or by word of mouth. The two Polish publications were confined to Poland,

for the publishers had no outside ramifications to push these unknown and infantile efforts. The '*La ci darem*' *Variations* had a different fate, for Robert Schumann had got hold of a copy in 1831 and astonished musical Germany with his 'Hats off, gentlemen: a genius!' Schumann was a great critic, amusing and full of a true musician's knowledge, so different from that of most musical critics; but he was not infallible. Who is? With Brahms and Chopin his fearless prognostications were fulfilled even beyond his expectation, and his eulogy of the '*Don Juan*' *Variations* did succeed in arousing interest. But we must remember that Schumann was only twenty-one years old in 1831, and had so far made no reputation either as critic or as composer. When he made a similar startling pronouncement about Brahms twenty-two years later he was a force to be reckoned with. The one great benefit that Chopin received from this flourish of Schumann's pen was the influence it had on Clara Wieck, who was later to become Madame Schumann. Clara's father, Friedrich Wieck, was a pianoforte professor in Leipzig, and to him Schumann suggested, in January 1832, that he should make Clara study the work, 'for there is plenty of *Geist* in it, and few difficulties'. Old Wieck himself was enamoured of it, recognizing its original features; and he wrote of it accordingly. The outcome was that Clara played the *Variations* in Leipzig in July 1832. Was this the first public performance of any work of Chopin by any celebrated pianist except the composer? As far as I can discover, it was.

This was the first step on the ladder; the second was to be the publications in Paris of the years 1833 and 1834. Some of the works had been written before Chopin's arrival in France, e.g. several of the *Mazurkas*, the first two *Nocturnes*, most of the twelve *Études*, Op. 10, the *Trio*, Op. 8, the *Concerto in E minor*, Op. 11, the *Fantasia on Polish Airs*, Op. 13, the *Krakowiak*, Op. 14, and the *Concertante* for Pianoforte and Violoncello. Other works published later also belonged to pre-Paris days, among them some of the *Études*, Op. 25, which were not published until 1837, and the *F minor Concerto*, Op. 21, published in 1836. The remainder must have been composed in Paris: the experiences and associations of Frédéric's new life were evidently beneficial to his creative faculty.

As the whole of the works will be discussed in detail in the second volume, it is now only necessary to mention them in the order of their appearance. December 1832, *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 6; *Five Mazurkas*, Op. 7; January 1833, *Three Nocturnes*, Op. 9; March 1833, *Trio* for Pianoforte, Violin and 'Cello, Op. 8; July 1833, *Grand Duo Concertante* for Pianoforte and 'Cello (without opus number); August 1833, *Twelve Études*, Op. 10; September 1833, *Concerto* in E minor, Op. 11; November 1833, *Variations brillantes*, Op. 12. The list for 1834 was as follows: January, *Three Nocturnes*, Op. 15; March, *Rondo* in E flat major, Op. 16; May, *Grand Fantasia on Polish Airs*, Op. 13, and *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 17; July, *Krakowiak*, Op. 14, and *Waltz* in E flat major, Op. 18; September, '*La ci darem*' *Variations* (Paris publication); October, *Boléro*, Op. 19. At about the same time the *Introduction and Polonaise* for Pianoforte and Violoncello, Op. 3, was published in Vienna.

This is a formidable list of works for a young and comparatively unknown composer to publish in two years; and when we learn that they were published more or less simultaneously in Germany it is obvious that Chopin could not remain unknown much longer. He was now a much happier man, and for the next few years much healthier. It was to be the period of his greatest fecundity. The old saying that nothing succeeds like success is certainly applicable to Frédéric: he thrived on it.

## CHAPTER XI

### REACTION TO CRITICISM

1834-1835

CHOPIN's music, as was only to be expected, was the target for the usual criticisms. On the whole the opinions were favourable. Some of the more important of the German papers, including the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, praised the works as they appeared. The French papers also noticed the compositions in a kindly manner. But there was one critic who for many years abused each work as it came out. His criticisms are unjust and spiteful, and time has passed its judgement otherwise, proving the falsity of these venomous attacks. The critic referred to was Heinrich Rellstab (1799-1860), the German critic and editor of a paper *Iris im Gebiete der Tonkunst*. The examples are quoted in the translation used by Niecks.

Speaking of the *Mazurkas*, Op. 7, Rellstab wrote:

In the dances before us the author satisfies the passion [for writing affectedly and unnaturally] to a loathsome excess. He is indefatigable, and I might say inexhaustible, in his search for ear-splitting discords, forced transitions, harsh modulations, ugly distortions of melody and rhythm. Everything it is possible to think of is raked up to produce the effect of odd originality, but especially strange keys, the most unnatural positions of chords, the most perverse combinations with regard to fingering. . . . If Mr. Chopin had shown this composition to a master, the latter would, it is to be hoped, have torn it and thrown it at his feet, which we hereby do symbolically.

The *Nocturnes*, Op. 9, were used to compare Chopin with Field.

Where Field smiles, Chopin makes a grinning grimace; where Field sighs, Chopin groans; where Field shrugs his shoulders, Chopin twists his whole body; where Field puts some seasoning into the food, Chopin empties a handful of Cayenne

pepper. . . . In short, if one holds Field's charming romances before a distorting concave mirror, so that every delicate expression becomes coarse, one gets Chopin's work. . . . We implore Mr. Chopin to return to nature.

Referring to the *Etudes*, Op. 10, Rellstab fires off some more squibs:

Those who have distorted fingers may put them right by practising these studies; but those who have not, should not play them, at least, not without having a surgeon at hand.

What would the countless students in the hundred years that have elapsed have done without these studies? What self-respecting professor would bring up his talented pupils without these incomparable finger-trainers? What would the concert-pianists ever since have found to replace them in their programmes? Mr. Rellstab was sadly and unjustifiably wrong. His lack of vision prevented his foreseeing that the originality of Chopin was to revolutionize the whole technique of pianoforte playing and writing.

There was a sequel to all this abuse. In number 5 of volume 5 of *Iris*, in 1834, Rellstab printed the following letter maintaining that it came from Chopin:

You are really a very bad man, and not worthy that God's earth either knows or bears you. The King of Prussia should have imprisoned you in a fortress; in that case he would have removed from the world a rebel, a disturber of the peace, and an infamous enemy of humanity, who probably will yet be choked in his own blood. I have noticed a great number of enemies, not only in Berlin, but in all towns which I visited last summer on my artistic tour, especially very many here in Leipzig, where I inform you of this, in order that you may in future change your disposition, and not act so uncharitably towards others. Another bad, bad trick, and you are done for! Do you understand me, you little man, you loveless and partial dog of a critic, you musical snarler, you Berlin wit-cracker, etc.

Your most obedient servant,

CHOPIN.

At the foot of this letter Rellstab comments: 'Whether Mr. Chopin has written this letter himself, I do not know, and will not assert it, but print the document that he may recognize or repudiate it.'

Evidently Rellstab was not quite certain that Chopin was the author of this vicious onslaught, or he would not have asked for a repudiation. Chopin was not in Germany in 1833, he had never visited Leipzig, he never made any artistic tour in Germany throughout his life. But apart from these proofs, the letter is quite unlike Chopin's character. He hated quarrels and could not bear using strong words to anyone, except later to some of his publishers. Vindictiveness was foreign to his nature, and there is no other instance of his venting his spleen on a critic. He was happy and secure in Paris, and had no difficulty in finding publishers for his works. One can safely assert that Chopin did not write the letter – perhaps one might hazard the opinion that it originated in Rellstab's own brain; it more easily compares with his own methods of scorning and belittling a much greater man.

A friend of Chopin's named Kallert took up the cudgels on his behalf and replied to Rellstab's critique. Nicolas Chopin saw the reply in a Warsaw paper, and in a letter to Frédéric dated April 26 wrote:

I am glad that you have by chance met a friend of your most bloodthirsty critic, and that he proposes to write proving the contrary of what has been said of you and your compositions; it has even been stated that you had replied by a letter written in very bad German and in equally bad taste: these gentlemen appear to ignore the fact that you have had a good education, and have not passed your time solely in deciphering notes. I am sure that in this respect you will keep silence, for your works speak loudly enough; already you have imitators, in spite of the old routine to which they were accustomed, and that is much.

It will be seen that Frédéric's father, who was also his school-master, could not let pass any slur upon his upbringing. His sister Isabella writes in the same strain saying that she has read the reply of Kallert to Rellstab's critique, and agrees with every word of it, recommending her brother to obtain and read the

article, which was apparently full of his praises. She ends by saying 'A propos, engraved portraits of you are selling here for ten florins'.

Ferdinand Hiller had invited Chopin to accompany him to the Rhenish Music Festival at Aix-la-Chapelle during May of 1834. Hiller was mildly associated with the Festival, the conductor of which was Beethoven's pupil Ferdinand Ries. Chopin readily accepted and was looking forward to the change and the prospect of meeting the musicians gathered there. News came of the postponement of the Festival, a disappointment for both of them, for Hiller was just as keen on the excursion as Chopin. After a few days word came that the Festival would be held after all, but by that time Chopin could not afford to go. He had spent the money he had saved for the journey, and he saw no chance of replenishing his purse. Suddenly he had an inspiration: what about the *E flat Waltz*, Op. 18, which he had just finished? He took it immediately to Camille Pleyel, who gave him 500 francs for it, and the two friends left for Germany. So far Schlesinger had been Chopin's only publisher in Paris, and this seemed an unfair transaction. The difficulty was got over by Pleyel reselling the Waltz to Schlesinger.

Mendelssohn had conducted the Lower Rhine Festival at Düsseldorf in 1833, and had given so much pleasure that he was appointed General Music-Director at Düsseldorf for three years. The task was not congenial to him, and he resigned in March 1834, taking over in 1835 the conductorship of the famous Gewandhaus Concerts in Leipzig. He went to the Festival at Aix-la-Chapelle in 1834, and met Chopin and Hiller. On May 23 he wrote to his mother:

I noticed a man with a moustache, in the front row of boxes, reading the score; and after the rehearsal, as he came down into the theatre and I went up, we met behind the scenes, and sure enough it was Ferdinand Hiller, who tumbled into my arms, ready to squeeze me to death for joy. He had come from Paris to hear the oratorio [Handel's *Deborah*, to which he had written some additions, and of which he had translated the English words into German], and Chopin had cut his lessons to come with him, and so we met once more. I could now thoroughly enjoy the Festival, for we three stayed together, and got a box

for ourselves in the theatre where the performances took place; and the next morning of course we were all at the piano, and that was a great delight to me. They have both improved in execution, and as a pianoforte player Chopin is now one of the very first; quite a second Paganini, doing entirely new things, and all sorts of impossibilities which one never thought would be done. Hiller also is a capital player, with plenty of power, and knows how to please. They both labour a little under the Parisian love for effect and strong contrasts, and often sadly lose sight of time and calmness and real musical feeling; perhaps I go too far the other way, so we mutually supply our deficiencies and all three learn from each other, I think; meanwhile I felt rather like a schoolmaster, and they seemed rather like beaux and dandies.

Mendelssohn insisted on the two travellers journeying with him to Düsseldorf, where they spent a day. The morning was taken up at the pianoforte, the afternoon with sight-seeing. They were shown round by the Director of the Art School, F. W. Schadow, and some of his pupils. According to Hiller, the Art-director marched round the town with the air of a prophet surrounded by his disciples. The evening was spent at Schadow's house, and he seems to have been more entertaining as a host than his dignified appearance suggested. Chopin had been excessively quiet and reserved all day, only muttering his appreciation at long intervals. He did not attempt to join in the heated discussion between the musicians and the artists, and grew more morose every minute. Quoting Hiller:

Mendelssohn and I knew that he would have his revenge, and were secretly rejoicing at the thought. At last the piano was opened; I began, Mendelssohn followed, then we asked Chopin to play, and rather doubtful looks were cast at him and us. But he had hardly played a few bars before everybody in the room, especially Schadow, was transfixed; nothing like it had ever been heard. They were all in the greatest delight, and begged for more and more.

Hiller and Chopin left the following morning for Coblenz, travelling up the beautiful Rhine by steamer, Mendelssohn going with them as far as Cologne. The three great musicians

said good-bye on the Rhine bridge, two of them making their way back to Paris.

At the end of the summer of 1834 Chopin received a letter from his old master Elsner which rather perturbed him for a while. It was dated September 14, and Elsner, whilst professing his pleasure at the success of his pupil in harmony and counterpoint, expressed the wish to see, before his death, the performance of an opera by Chopin, 'not only for the sake of increasing your fame, but in the interests of musical art generally, especially if the subject were taken from the history of Poland'. Chopin was stirred by this request. He sought out his friend and countryman Stanislas Kozmian and asked him to write a libretto; but there, so it appears, the project ended. He must have quickly realized that the field of opera was not his. His few early attempts at orchestration were not successful, this he knew; his seventeen songs, charming as some of them are, are only trifles, and do not suggest the grand emotion required for the stage; his sense of the constructional power necessary for a successful opera was too limited to warrant his embarking on such an ambitious scheme. So the idea evaporated.

Hector Berlioz conducted a concert on December 7, 1834, at the Conservatoire, at which Chopin played the *Larghetto* from his *F minor Concerto*. The hectic young Frenchman of thirty had included two of his overtures, *Les Francs-Juges* and *King Lear*, and his *Harold in Italy* Symphony in the programme, and Chopin's small-sounding and wistful music made little effect against the bizarre originality of the orchestral works. Again Chopin was disappointed at his reception. The lack of enthusiasm offered small inducement for proceeding with the distasteful career of a concert-artist. The shy pianist had always loathed public playing, and did not wish to suffer if he were not even to be recompensed by the plaudits of an audience. Nevertheless, he took part in another concert on the 25th of the same month, this time in conjunction with several other artists, Liszt, the violinist Ernst, and three singers. The event was a *matinée musicale* at the Salle Pleyel organized by a Dr. François Stoepel, a professor of music and author of technical books, who came to Paris from Berlin in 1829 and died there in 1836 at the age of forty-two. Amongst his various activities he wrote articles for the *Gazette*

*musicale* in Paris. The two pianists, who were for the moment fast friends, played a *Grand Duo* for four hands by Moscheles. A critic in the *Gazette musicale* expresses himself ecstatically over their playing and proceeds 'The most enthusiastic applause showed MM. Liszt and Chopin better than we can do by our words how much they charmed the audience, which they electrified a second time by a *Duo* for two pianofortes composed by Liszt'. According to Miss Ramann in her biography of Liszt, this *Duo* was written in 1834, but never published. It was on a theme of Mendelssohn, and was probably in variation form. We shall always be hazy about the work, for the manuscript was lost.

Niecks vaguely mentions a concert at the Salle Pleyel during March 1835, at which Chopin, Hiller, Herz, Stamaty and Osborne, as well as some singers, appeared. There can be no question that Kalkbrenner's monstrosity, the six-pianoforte concerto, was given another hearing. On February 25, at the Salle Erard, Chopin and Hiller played a two-pianoforte duet which the latter had just written.

Karasowski makes another mistake when he writes of a second recital given by Chopin in Paris during February 1834, at which he played his *E minor Concerto* for the first time in Paris, the conductor being Habeneck. The occasion was a charity concert on April 5, 1835, at the Italian Opera-house, for the benefit of poor Polish refugees in Paris. Several singers from the Opera took part, Chopin played the *E minor Concerto*, conducted by Habeneck, and, with Liszt, the two-pianoforte duet of Hiller. Once again the applause was without enthusiasm, a fact due, most certainly, to the large auditorium, which Chopin's delicate touch and smallness of tone could not hope to fill. The *Gazette musicale* praised the pianist: 'The concerto of Chopin, so original, so colourful in style, so full of ingenious details, and with such fresh melodies, gained a very great success. It is difficult not to be monotonous in a pianoforte concerto; and the amateurs could not but thank Chopin for the pleasure he had given them, while the artists could but admire the talent which enabled him to avoid monotony, and at the same time to keep alive such an old form.'

We should not take too much notice of the laudatory remarks

in this paper, for it was owned by Schlesinger, the publisher of almost all of Chopin's works. He would see that the composers who gave him their manuscripts should not suffer from the criticisms of any of his staff. Some of these writers were friends of Chopin. But what is of supreme importance is the fact that the reception accorded to Chopin at this concert in particular, helped by the frigidity at the Berlioz concert in the previous December, finally convinced him that concert playing was not in his line. His poetical and refined style was too intimate for mass consumption; the salon, with its greater friendliness, inspired him to the heights he wished to reach. He told Liszt: 'I am not fitted to give concerts. The crowd intimidates me; I feel asphyxiated by its breath, paralysed by its curious looks, dumb before the strange faces; but you, you are destined for the crowd, because when you do not captivate your public you have the wherewithal to overpower it.'

For a man of such obvious talent to be determined to renounce a career as pianist at the age of twenty-five seems almost incredible. Yet this was the firm intention of Chopin. If he had had no success, had never received adequate recognition, such a decision could be understood; but he could advance neither of these reasons. His sensitiveness was too great a handicap to carry. The glamour of the platform and the acclamations of the multitude meant nothing to him: they were nausea. He was much happier, more natural, more in command of his thoughts and emotions when playing alone or to a few beloved friends. These were the moments when his genius was awakened, when he could truly express himself. Once an artist is conscious of his art suffering by the disturbing currents of an audience he will never be able to be natural on a platform again. That confidence and assurance which are indispensable to any actor, orator or other performer in public have evaporated; in their place come self-consciousness, nervousness and hesitation, and with these there can be no art. No! Chopin had not the stamina, nor the nerve, nor the steel in his heart necessary for exposing his talents.

Was Chopin a great pianist? As a technician he must have been immense, for the intricacies and difficulties of his compositions have occupied all the pianists and pianoforte students in the world ever since, and made them often think hard things of

him while mastering his complexities; yet he was able to juggle with them himself, apparently with consummate ease. And his control of tone-colour, with every possible gradation and nuance, must have been almost miraculous. These two gifts were supplemented by a still greater one, the ability to make people forget their own personalities, with their joys and sorrows, and be swayed by his. His hearers were like putty in his hands – they became his slaves. Yet, with all these precious gifts, it is still hard to believe that he possessed the equipment necessary for a concert-artist – the repertoire, the power to probe into the minds of other composers and interpret their compositions through their eyes. He was the greatest exponent of his own music of all time, but we cannot say whether he was an equally great exponent of that of other people. Hearsay and the opinions of others are of no value in the judgement of an artist; only by hearing him can one make an honest criticism. But from the evidence which has been handed down to us through letters and biographies, we must assume that Chopin was wise to retire from the concert arena. He was a great composer, the greatest for the pianoforte – far greater than he could ever have been as a pianist. He knew it; and he sacrificed the more remunerative side of his art, and the terrible drudgery belonging to it, for the less paying but far nobler and more everlasting, the creative side.

His dislike of playing in public was not, however, the sole reason for his determination. From his juvenile stage, when we saw him nurtured more like a hot-house flower than like a healthy schoolboy, pampered and spoilt as if he had been an only daughter, he had developed into a fretful and touchy young man. He had not the backbone to withstand knocks, more particularly now when he was enjoying the petting of the smart and charming society ladies of Paris. He had always been moody, but now he tended to be easily irritated if things did not happen as he wished. Doubtless his pride was pricked at his two apparent public failures, and rather than stand up to them like a man it gave him a perverse pleasure to be childish. He loved adulation as much as Liszt did, but it had to be quietly, even secretly, bestowed, whereas Liszt wanted the world to see it.

Franz Liszt was the antithesis of Chopin in every way. His

physique was magnificent, his nerve the envy of all his colleagues: his good looks were his passport, his love for adulation his birthright, his magnetism over women his driving force. If ever any man was coveted by women of every class, it was he. Born in 1811, he had a year's advantage over Chopin, but, unlike the latter, who had only conquered Paris (and then mainly the aristocratic circles), he had subjugated most of Europe. He was a prodigy in the accepted sense, inasmuch as he began a public career at the age of nine and never left it. With Paganini, he was the musical idol of Europe; no one could compete with them. All sensitiveness and timidity had left Liszt long ago, if he ever possessed either quality, and what remained was a hard-boiled pianist, who used his art as a medium for notoriety, for making himself an outstanding figure in European culture. Not that he was not a magnificent pianist, and, at times, a truly great artist; but his soul did not submit to the appeal of beauty, his mind did not seek refinement, his heart, though magnanimous, was too often the slave of ambition. Liszt was one of the greatest-hearted musicians that ever lived. The instances of his help and encouragement to the lesser known are legion, but his later life suggests that they were often the outcome of self-satisfaction and self-advertisement. His private comments on his fellow-artists were by no means as charitable as those made in public, and the letters that passed between Liszt and Marie d'Agoult contain many instances of petty carping at the successes of his contemporaries.

The evolution of the art of music in modern times owes as much to Liszt as to any other musician, for he had exceptional talents and a far-thinking brain. His greatness was his vision, his weakness the love of the theatrical.

He was a very clever man. During his life in Paris as a youngster in his 'teens he became acquainted with the superb band of *littérateurs* who were revolutionizing the outlook on art, and he quickly absorbed their ideas. With his personal attributes, his great gifts and his unchallenged popularity, he had no difficulty in establishing himself amongst the leaders of every branch of thought and culture, and, though he never became a gentleman, he very soon assimilated the airs of the *grand seigneur*, a pose he adored all his life. To Chopin he was always kind, for

jealousy was no part of his constitution. He was amongst the first in Paris to realize the originality of the young Pole, both as pianist and composer, and did everything in his power to kindle helpful appreciation in the right quarters. Chopin owed a lot to Liszt in those first years, and maybe was duly grateful, although his early admiration cooled later on. Liszt possessed all the qualities that Chopin lacked. Liszt had the courage of a tiger, Chopin the recoil of a gazelle; Liszt had the cheek of a school-boy, Chopin the diffidence of a virgin; Liszt had the stamina of a Marathon runner, Chopin the frailty of Shelley's Sensitive Plant. No wonder that one broke the heart of practically every woman he saw, whilst the other fled in terror from almost every human contact. Liszt had the audacity to flaunt the pundits, Chopin was overwhelmed by them.

Another great figure who has survived the test of time and who was contemporary with the two pianist-composers was Hector Berlioz. Berlioz was seven years older than Chopin. He had won the Prix de Rome in 1830 and had returned from his travels in 1832. The winning of such a scholarship carried a certain *cachet*, but hopes on this particular winner had run inordinately high. Opportunities were at once granted him to conduct his compositions, and on December 9, 1832, he made his *début* with his *Episode de la vie d'un artiste*, which is in two parts – Part I being the *Symphonie fantastique*, Part II *Lélio, ou le retour à la vie*. There are many regular concert-goers of to-day who cannot understand the *Symphonie fantastique*, apart from those who do not like it or the few who adore it, and the effect produced on the Parisians in 1832 must have been as fantastic as the symphony. Berlioz was startling; he was something quite apart from all other composers, whether contemporaries or not. We know that both Bach and Beethoven wrote ahead of their period, yet even their more abstruse music (for instance, the Chromatic Fantasia and some of the Cantatas of Bach, the later Pianoforte Sonatas and the last four Quartets of Beethoven) must have been intelligible to the educated few. But Berlioz is still in the advance guard. The leaders of the Romantics like Liszt and Victor Hugo naturally were wild in their praise and admiration, whether they could comfortably digest his music or not; but not many musicians shared their enthusiasm, and the general public was stupefied.

Chopin was attracted at first by Berlioz' fire and daring, spurred by the energetic praises of Liszt, who had known Berlioz before the *Prix de Rome* days. The attraction was mutual, but Berlioz was to admire Chopin longer than Chopin did Berlioz, whose music he found too revolutionary. Chopin, like all Poles, was against every ruler or government; but music for him must never contain coarseness or vulgarity; these two qualities he found in Berlioz, and they irritated him. He hated ugliness in any form – in art, literature, music, human beings, animals, dress. His attitude towards this violent and highly-flavoured music is thus comprehensible; it was too tense and vibrant. When Hiller left for Germany in 1836, and Liszt later on offended Chopin beyond his prescribed limits of friendship, Chopin and Berlioz drifted apart. Berlioz could never make any money out of music in France – Germany would have accepted him with open arms – and what living he did make was out of journalism and criticism. His pen always exalted Chopin, even after the latter's death. He once wrote of Chopin: 'As pianist and composer he is an artist apart. He bears no resemblance to any other musician I know'. Chopin, on the other hand, was occasionally spiteful. Once he told Franchomme that any man had ample justification in breaking friendship with the composer of such music.

These three great men of the same epoch, so different, so imperative to the evolution of their art, have each wielded their influence on all subsequent music. Berlioz was never understood, Liszt was over-understood, Chopin was misunderstood.

Three weeks after that ill-fated concert at the Italian Opera-house of April 5, Chopin agreed to play at a benefit concert for the conductor Habeneck. It was one of the series of the *Société des Concerts du Conservatoire*, on April 24, and was the only one of these concerts at which he played. He gave the first performance of the *Andante spianato et Polonaise brillante*, Op. 22, and appears to have been more successful this time; but his decision remained unaltered.

On January 24 the *première* of *I Puritani*, by Vincenzo Bellini, was given at the Théâtre Italien in Paris. It was a great occasion, for this young Sicilian was rapidly overtaking Rossini as the most popular operatic composer in Europe. Chopin was

Chopin m'a, si fa un Villagierina  
da qui, e montante in S. S. n. 10,  
sono ~~per~~ che Hiller Sitt e Derigny.  
Siamo accompagnati da Chopin.  
Edmondo Betiz e  
Eant per

H. B.

LETTER FROM BERLIOZ TO CHOPIN  
(Probably written in 1834 or 1835)



present. As we have seen, he appreciated good singing, and with such a cast as Grisi, Rubini, Lablache and Tamburini we can feel sure that his pleasure was immense. He and Bellini had become fast friends. Their natures fitted, although the Sicilian lacked the polish and fine manners of the Pole. They both had the same outlook on music, for it was lyrical beauty rather than grandiose effects that appealed to them. Perhaps that is why neither of them could orchestrate effectively; the soul in music was to them its essence; after that came elegance and simplicity of appeal. They both worshipped Mozart, and this was their common ground. Bellini died in September 1835 at the early age of 34, on the eve of the opening night of the autumn season at the Théâtre Italien, *I Puritani* being the chosen opera. Had he lived a full life he undoubtedly would have written still finer operas, for he had plenty of creative ability, and was developing rapidly, as his works prove. His funeral ceremony was magnificent. The leading musicians of Paris attended, the singers from the Opera performed a specially arranged *Lacrymosa*, and Habeneck conducted. Bellini was buried, as was Chopin, in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise, but their bodies did not rest side by side as Chopin has wrongfully been credited with having wished.

The melodic curve of the themes of these two composers is often similar. There is the same fragility about them, a sense of transparency which is heightened still more by the flowing quaver accompaniment. Many sections of the Nocturnes could have been written for a Rubini by Bellini, and one can pick out many instances in the arias which sound as pianistic as any Chopin phrase of the same kind. The love that Chopin had for Italian opera in general unmistakably influenced his melodies, and Bellini approached him in style more nearly than any other of the Italian composers. We find this *cantilena* style chiefly in Chopin's middle period, the earlier works being more showy and brilliant, the later grander and more reflective.

We have had little occasion to speak of another side of Chopin's character – his attitude towards women. Constantia Gladkowska had been his first love, but it is doubtful whether this affection was ever more serious than juvenile sentimentality, although he appeared so heartbroken, and insisted on leaving Poland because of her. Once he was away from his country she

did not seriously occupy his mind, and the news of her marriage the following year does not appear to have upset him. As proof that his heart was not broken we find him a willing victim to a charming face or a winning smile. Like the poet, he had to have an ideal – someone from whom he could obtain an imaginary emotional thrill. None of his flirtations was deep or lasting, but probably there were many.

About this time, however, he became more seriously a victim, the lady being the beautiful and fascinating Countess Delphine Potocka. She was the same age as Chopin, and Guy de Pourtalès describes her as ‘of regal bearing, with a delicately chiselled nose, a most passionate mouth, and the high, pensive forehead of the true voluptuary. Her whole appearance suggested a slender and puissant goddess, but whatever luxuriance she had was cooled by the severity of her glance’. She was an amateur singer, and the possessor of a lovely voice. Chopin used to accompany her, and was probably her expert adviser. Liszt writes of her: ‘The ethereal beauty and enchanting voice of the Countess enthralled him [Chopin] by a fascination which was full of respectful admiration.’

For a time Frédéric was bewitched by her beauty and her gaiety, and she, being unhappily married, was attracted by this opposite, who could weave a new web of fancies and produce fresh aspects of loveliness, bringing to her life a fulfilment for which her imagination had always longed. They loved – she being the aggressor, for Chopin was no more decided in his amours than he was in the general affairs of life. For a while Chopin was happy. If this *liaison* could have gone on indefinitely the vista of his life might have been different, for she was a very human creature. But she had a jealous husband, and the stopping of her allowance made an early return to Warsaw imperative. Possibly she was Chopin’s first carnal love. When he was dying he asked for Delphine Potocka to be brought so that she could sing to him once again. Her voice was the last music he heard.

## CHAPTER XII

### MARIE WODZINSKA

1835-1837

ON July 18, 1834, Chopin wrote a letter to Felix Wodzinski, a boyhood friend who had been at his father's school in Warsaw, and with whose family he had spent several of his school vacations. Countess Wodzinska and her children were living for the time being at Geneva, preferring the tranquillity of Switzerland to their own disturbed country. After the usual greetings and thanks the letter proceeds:

If I had not only just come back from the Rhineland, [the trip with Hiller] and had not business which I cannot drop now at this moment, I should at once have gone to Geneva to accept with thanks your respected Mother's invitation. But fate is hard, and there is nothing to be done. Your sister was so kind as to send me her composition. I was more delighted than I can say, and at once, the same evening, I improvised, in one of the *salons* here, on a charming theme by that Maria with whom I long ago raced about the rooms of the Poznan house - and to-day! *Je prends la liberté d'envoyer à mon estimable collègue Mlle Marie une petite valse que je viens de publier.* May it give her a hundredth part of the pleasure which I felt on receiving her variations. I end by once more most sincerely thanking your Mother for her kind remembrance of her faithful servant, in whom also flows a little Kujaw [vagabond] blood.

F. CHOPIN.

P.S. Embrace my dear Anton, and stifle Casimir with *tendresses*, if you can. As for Miss Maria, bow before her very elegantly and respectfully, in wonder, and say to yourself: 'Good Lord, how she has grown up!'

Soon after this the son Anton came to live in Paris, and he and Frédéric frequently saw each other. In this way Frédéric knew all the family movements. In the summer of the following year he went to Karlsbad to see his parents; he knew that the

Wodzinski family were staying at Dresden on their way back to Poland, and he made the little extra trip across the Saxon frontier to greet them. The Countess Wodzinska had written to him on February 28, 1835, asking when they were to have the pleasure of seeing him there. She also makes a request:

Pardon me, Monsieur Frédéric, if I ask you to obtain for me a collection of autographs of the celebrated men among whom (as is only natural) you are living. Polish, French, German, etc. — it doesn't matter, even if it is a Jew with his beard, provided he is worthy, be so good as to collect them and send them and I will be infinitely grateful; but above all keep your friendship for us, you have had ours for a long time.

Frédéric's joy at seeing his parents again after five years was intense. His excitement at the prospect of meeting them was so great that he left Paris earlier than necessary, meaning to surprise them, and had a couple of days to spare in the beautiful little Bohemian watering-place before their arrival. When the parents arrived they found some friends who recommended a lodging, but there was no letter from Frédéric. At 4 a.m. they were awakened out of their sleep by a Polish friend, M. Zawadski, who told them that Frédéric was already in the town, that he had sought for his parents everywhere, but without success. Nicolas dressed immediately and together with Zawadski set out for the long-looked-for meeting with his beloved and now famous son. In a letter to his daughters in Warsaw he tells them that Frédéric has not altered, that he is just the same as before he left on his travels. Frédéric himself added a postscript to his father's letter which is as follows, and is dated August 16:

MY DEAR CHILDREN,—

This is the first letter you will get with both Papa's and my writing. We are happier than we can describe. We hug each other and hug again; what more can we do; what a pity we are not all together. But, but, it's wonderful! How good God is to us! I'm writing all anyhow; it's better not to try to think to-day; just to be happy, now happiness has come. That's all I can do to-day. The same Parents, just the same as ever, only a little older. We walk, I take my Lady Mummy on my arm, we talk about you, we imitate naughty nephews, we tell how often we

have thought about each other. We eat and drink together, we caress each other, we scold each other. I am *au comble de mon bonheur*. The same ways, the same gestures with which I grew up, the same hand that I have not kissed for so long. Well, my children, I embrace you; and forgive me that I can't collect my thoughts and write about anything else but that we are happy at this minute, that I had only hope and now have the realization, and am happy, happy, happy. I could hug you and my brothers-in-law to death; – my dearest in this world.

CH.

P.S. A thousand kisses to Papa Zywny for the music and a million greetings to M. Wiesolowski, who brought my happiness some dozens of miles nearer to me. Greetings to Count Frederick Skarbek.

Frédéric was 'at the height of his happiness'. His devotion to his family was perhaps the trait in him most to be admired, and we have proof once again of this love which united them all. These were happy days for the three of them, although neither of his parents was physically well. They had been ordered to take the waters of Karlsbad by their Polish doctors, but their aches and pains must have evaporated at the sight of their son.

When Frédéric left them early in September to go to Dresden his heart was bursting with the good things of life. His moroseness had disappeared, the jovial spirits of his youth returned, and when he appeared at the Wodzinskis', and was again with Poles and lifelong friends, he was radiant with *joie de vivre*. He had been looking forward to this visit almost as expectantly as to the Karlsbad one. The recent intercourse with Anton in Paris had stirred up bygone memories of the family, and his imagination centred upon Marie, to whom he had always felt an attraction.

The parting of the parents and their son did not take place at Karlsbad as Niecks would have us believe. They had been invited to spend a few days with the Countess Thun at Tetschen, a village in Bohemia on the Elbe, and from there the parents crossed the frontier, travelling due east to Breslau, Frédéric going north-west to Dresden. This was the last time they saw their son. Nicolas wrote to Frédéric from Breslay on September

14 telling him of their safe journey over badly lit and rough roads, and asking him to give their respects to the Count, Countess and all the Wodzinski family.

Frédéric had discussed Marie with his parents, and they were delighted at the prospect of such a fine daughter-in-law. The girl was sensible, well-born, and intelligent – nineteen years old and of good figure; and though without actual beauty – for her features were too irregular – she possessed great charm. She was partly Lithuanian, descending from the old Jagellonian dynasty, and partly Italian, from the great Sforza family. Her dark skin was due to her Italian ancestry; her eyes were black, but not without a lustrous fire; her hair was jet black also. Her mouth has been described as full lipped, suggesting great voluptuousness. Some people thought her ugly, others extremely attractive. Evidently she had talent, but her mind was that of a *dilettante* and she never became proficient in any particular endeavour. This lack of seriousness permeated her nature. She knew that her charm appealed to men and she liked their attentions. By the time of Chopin's arrival she had the airs of a coquette.

On his side Frédéric was even more attracted by her than he had expected. Every morning they would walk together, the girl showing the light-hearted young visitor the sights of the Saxon capital – the museums, the Art Gallery, the monuments, the walk along the Elbe that stretches away from the Royal Opera House. The evenings were usually spent by the Wodzinski family at the house of their uncle, the elderly Palatine Wodzinski. He had once been all-powerful in Poland, a soldier, a patriot, a man of affairs. The revolution had deprived him of everything, and here in Dresden, the home of the Saxon kings of Poland, he had decided to live and to die, his only possessions being his prints and his books. But the spirit of the nobleman remained; he was always a stickler for etiquette, and was eventually to prove the chief bar to Frédéric's hopes.

At this house Frédéric and Marie would sit in the corner and whisper, and the old uncle would notice them and observe to his sister-in-law that her daughter was making eyes at the young musician. Music meant nothing to him, and his aristocratic breeding could not be reconciled to the idea of a niece of



**MARIE WODZINSKA**

*[Collection Edouard Ganche]*



his marrying a musician, however famous. The Countess only laughed, saying that it was an old friendship and that no harm could come from it. Still unconvinced, the Palatine thought it wiser to say no more at the moment. So the young lovers were left undisturbed.

Towards the end of September the hour of parting struck. Frédéric was in love with Marie, she was in love with love, though at the moment she thought she loved Frédéric. She took a rose from a bouquet on the table; Frédéric pressed it to his heart and was gone.

According to Niecks and to Count Wodzinski in his *Les Trois Romans de Frédéric Chopin*, Frédéric improvised a waltz at this moment of parting, which he dedicated to Marie, promising to send the manuscript from Paris. But this has been disproved by a letter since found from Marie, dated September 1835, in which she distinctly says that she is playing the Waltz to remind them all of the 'brother' who has just left them.

DRESDEN,

September 1835.

Although you do not like either to receive or to write letters, I want to take the opportunity of M. Cichowski's departure to give you news of Dresden since you left. I shall be boring you again, though no longer with my playing. On Saturday, when you left us, we all, with tears in our eyes, walked sadly about the room where, a few minutes before, you had still been amongst us. My father soon came in, and was desolated not to have been able to say good-bye to you. My mother, in tears, reminded us every minute of something about 'her fourth son Frédéric' (as she says). Felix looked terribly depressed; Casimir tried to make his usual jokes, but on that day they did not come off, because he played the clown half crying. My father laughed at us, but only to keep from crying himself. At eleven o'clock the singing master came; the lesson went very badly, we could not sing. You were the subject of all conversations. Felix kept asking me to play the *Valse* (the last thing we received and heard from you).

We found pleasure in it: they in listening to it, I in playing it, because it reminded us of the brother who had just left us. I have taken it to be bound; the German opened his eyes wide, when he saw only a single sheet; (he did not know who had written it). No one wanted any dinner; we kept looking at your

usual place at the table, and at 'Fritz's corner'. The little chair is still in its place, and will probably stay there as long as we have this apartment. In the evening we went to my aunt's to avoid the sadness of this first evening without you. My father came to fetch us, saying that it was just as impossible for him as for us to stay in this house on that day. We felt much better for leaving the place that reminded us too much of our sorrow. . . .

Marie then speaks at some length of her brother Anton, who evidently caused his family a good deal of anxiety, begging Chopin to befriend him and look after him in Paris. She goes on:

. . . We never cease to regret that your name is not Chopinski, or that there should not be any other means of knowing that you are Polish, so that the French could not dispute with us the glory of being your compatriots. But I go on too long. Your time is so precious that it is really a crime to make you waste it in reading my scribbles. However, you are sure not to read all of them. The letter of little Marie will be relegated to a corner as soon as you have read a few lines. So that I cannot reproach myself with stealing your time.

A Dieu (quite simply). A childhood's friend does not need fine phrases. . . .

This letter is the longest that is known to have been written by Marie. She admits that she is a bad letter-writer. The Countess appears to have been the only one of the Wodzinskis who would have welcomed Frédéric into the family. The Count was ruled by the old Palatine; the brothers were snobs; Marie was too irresponsible to be relied upon for anything – but the mother had real affection for the young pianist. Her only anxiety concerned his health. Her letters are full of admonitions and advice about going to bed early, wrapping up, and wearing warm socks; whereas all we can glean from Marie's letters is a certain amount of family sentimentality.

The *Waltz* was inscribed '*pour Mlle Marie*', and was signed 'F. Chopin, Drezno, September 1835.' It was posthumously published by Fontana as Op. 69, No. 1.

The following summer the Wodzinski family was at Marienbad. Chopin made the journey once again to see them. A

letter from the Countess written from Dresden on February 5 had expressed the hope that he would visit them again, Clara Wieck having hinted to her of this possibility. He refused an invitation from Mendelssohn, contained in a letter dated Leipzig, March 28, to go with him to the Lower Rhine Festival at Düsseldorf in the summer – another proof of his wish to remain free to join the Wodzinskis. He must have felt optimistic, for he hated the tediousness of diligence travelling, but his reception repaid him for his discomfort. The mother welcomed him most tenderly, and granted her daughter every facility to walk and talk with Frédéric.

The family had rented a villa, and in the garden the two young lovers unburdened their hearts. Frédéric arrived about the end of July, and during the third week in August accompanied the family back to Dresden; but not until the 7th of September could he muster up the courage to declare himself. That evening, as the sun was setting, he proposed and was accepted. The Countess gave her consent, but on one condition – no one but the three should know of the engagement: the strictest secrecy must be observed. In time the mother promised to persuade the father to agree, perhaps after their departure for Poland, for by then the aristocratic pride of the uncle would have less influence on his brother. In the meantime no word or sign should give away the secret.

On the 9th September Frédéric left for Leipzig. Schumann had written to him c/o a professor of music in Dresden, C. Kragen, having heard that Chopin was to be there; and as he himself was passing through the Saxon capital *en route* to his birthplace, Zwickau, he hoped that a meeting would be possible. They met, however, in Leipzig.

Frédéric and Marie never saw each other again. Letters passed between them, but on Marie's side they were mostly postscripts to her mother's letters, for the Countess kept up the correspondence for some time. In a postscript to a letter from her brother Casimir, dated Dresden, September 15, 1836, Marie wrote:

We cannot console ourselves for your departure; the three [*sic*] days that have passed seem centuries to us; do you feel the

same? Do you miss your friends a little? Yes, I answer for you, and I think that I am not mistaken; at least, I want to believe so. I tell myself that this 'yes' comes from you (for you would have said it, wouldn't you?).

The slippers are finished, and I am sending them to you. What upsets me is that they are too big, although I gave your shoe for the size, *carissimo maestro*, but he is a vulgar German. Dr. Paris consoles me, for he says it is a good thing, because in the winter you ought to wear very warm woollen socks.

Mother has had a tooth out, which has pulled her down a lot. She has had to stay in bed until now. In a fortnight we shall start for Poland. I shall see your parents: what happiness for me! Will dear Louise remember me? Adieu, *mio carissimo maestro*, do not forget Dresden now and Poland soon. Adieu, *au revoir*. Ah! if that could be sooner!

MARIE.

P.S. Casimir has told me that the piano at Sluzewo [the home of the Wodzinskis] is so dilapidated that it can no longer be played on. So think of Pleyel. In happier times, not like those of to-day (as far as concerns us) I hope to hear you on the same piano; *au revoir*, *au revoir*, *au revoir*! That gives hope.

In a letter of January 25, 1837, the Countess thanks Chopin for the autographs of famous men which he had sent in answer to the request in her letter of two years before, and concludes with the following phrase which is worthy of notice: 'From henceforward it will be necessary to be still more prudent in inquiring about our loved one'. This obviously means that references to Marie in his letters must be scarcer, for the whole family read them. Chopin, with his sensitiveness, divined the thin end of the wedge. He was no longer so happy. He had written on November 1, 1836, and said: 'I think of nothing but slippers, and play for the twilight hour.' The proposal was made in the twilight, and this hour was sacred to him. This passage must have caused trouble and inspired the mother to write counselling more circumspection. Marie added her usual postscript, proving her indolence:

Mother has been scolding, but I thank you charmingly, very charmingly, and when we see each other again I will thank you

more charmingly still. I am obviously too lazy to write, because putting off my thanks till our next meeting saves me many words to-day. Mother has described the way we live, there is nothing left for me to tell you, except that it is thawing: great news, isn't it? . . . I occupy myself a little to kill time. Just now I have '*l'Allemagne*' of Heine, which interests me tremendously. But I must stop, and entrust you to God's care. I hope that it is not necessary to repeat to you the assurance of the sentiments of your faithful secretary Marie.

These few lines were disappointing to Frédéric. He could not fail to notice that friendliness was taking the place of affection in them. The aspirations which once filled the horizon of his thoughts, and the dreams of a future home of his own suddenly seemed to vanish.

Marie had given him an album on his last visit, in which he had written a *Lento con gran' espressione*. It was a preliminary exercise in the form of a Nocturne which he had dedicated to his sister Louise in 1830 with the following words: 'To my sister Louise as an exercise before beginning the study of my second Concerto'. The album also contained eight songs to words by Witwicki and Mickiewicz. He could not write anything fresh in it – 'in a hundred years I could not have written anything in it. There are days when I cannot help myself. To-day I would rather be in Sluzewo than write to Sluzewo. I could say more than I can write' – this is what he tells the Countess on April 2, 1837. Marie writes and thanks him in a still more formal letter:

I can only write you a few words, to thank you for the charming album you have sent me. I will not try to tell you how much pleasure I felt at receiving it, because it would be in vain. Receive, I beg you, the assurance of all the feelings of gratitude that I owe you. Believe in the attachment that all our family have vowed to you for life, and particularly your worst pupil and friend of your childhood. Adieu. Mother embraces you tenderly. Thérèse is always talking of her Chopena. Adieu, do not forget us.

MARIE.

There are two more letters from the Countess, asking after his health, and giving news of his family whom she has seen, but

it is obvious that she had abandoned all hopes of the marriage. Whether this was because of family objections or on account of the frailty of Frédéric's health it is impossible to discover. Possibly it was all due to a cooling off on Marie's part. In the year 1841 she married Count Joseph Skarbek, the son of Count Frederick Skarbek, Chopin's godfather. The marriage proved unhappy and was annulled. Marie later married another Pole named Orpiszewski, but as the years went on her thoughts flew more and more to the discarded playmate in Paris.

The breaking of the engagement did not prevent Frédéric from writing to various members of the Wodzinski family. Anton was away fighting with the Polish legion in Spain, and his mother was anxious for news. Chopin wrote to her on May 14, 1837, saying that he enclosed a 'few words from Anton. I haste to forward to you this proof of his good health and spirits. As he asks, I shall answer him at once. . . . I shall not mention the trouble at home. . . .' We can gather from this that there had been dissensions in the family over the entanglement with Marie.

In the following June Frédéric writes to Anton sympathizing with him for being wounded, and imploring him to go home. On the 18th of the same month he writes to the Countess saying that Anton is well, that he is in Saragossa, and begs the household to remember him. Further on in the letter he inquires about the summer and the garden, and about family matters, but there is no mention of Marie beyond his respects to all the children. On August 14 in another letter to the Countess he admits having kept the news of Anton being wounded away from her, 'as I wished to tell it orally rather than by letter; but as that is now different . . . I enclose his last letter'. This is significant. Frédéric had evidently been looking forward to spending another summer with them. But the romance was over.

Chopin never completely recovered from this blow to his hopes. The satisfaction of happiness and the comfort of a home might have made all the difference to his health, but an unsettled mind and a broken heart are usually not the best tonics for a sickly body. For a long time he cared for nothing, took little interest in his affairs, and finally two friends persuaded



‘ MOIA BIÉDA ’



him to go with them to London for a complete change. It was no wonder that he agreed so readily to be 'looked after' by George Sand – he was in a beautifully receptive condition to succumb to the spell of any intelligent woman.

Chopin carefully wrapped up all the letters of the Wodzinski family, together with the rose which Marie had given him in Dresden, and placed them in an envelope on which he wrote in Polish 'Moia Bięda' – (my sorrow). The letters were found, tied carefully with a band of ribbon, after his death.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FAMOUS CONTEMPORARIES

1835-1837

ON leaving Dresden in 1835 Chopin went direct to Leipzig. Friedrich Wieck, who was always full of gossip, broadcast the news that he was coming, but would not give a concert because he was too lazy. Clara's father was under the impression that Chopin had said that no one in Germany could play his compositions. His rejoinder was: 'We will see what Clara can do'. The musicians were all agog to hear this much-heralded and original pianist, and gatherings of them had been collected by Wieck for the purpose. Chopin called first on Henrietta Voigt, a friend of Schumann's; this annoyed the old busy-body; for Wieck had been instrumental in pushing the compositions of the expected visitor, and he thought himself slighted. When Chopin arrived at Wieck's house on the arm of Mendelssohn, his host retired to another room. We know how much Schumann had to contend with when he first paid his attentions to Clara, so this behaviour is not entirely unexpected. Chopin met Schumann for the first time. How happy Schumann must have been at this sudden gathering of the Davidsbündler!

Frédéric had not expected to meet his great champion. The real object of his visit was to hear the wonderful girl of sixteen play, particularly if she played something of his own. She began with the *F sharp minor Sonata*, Op. 11, of Schumann, which had only just been written, and was, as yet, in manuscript, and this was followed by a movement from a Concerto of Chopin and two of his Studies. Chopin was very much impressed by her playing, and gave her a copy of one of his recent compositions. He in turn played the *E flat Nocturne*, Op. 9, No. 2, admitting that he felt too ill to attempt anything more *forte*. Clara admired his *pianissimo*, but thought his playing too capricious.

Mendelssohn has left us an impression of Chopin's playing in a letter to his sister Fanny and his father, dated October 6,

1835. Neither of the two had been pleased with Frédéric's playing on a previous occasion, and Mendelssohn now attempted to convince them that their judgement was at fault.

. . . There is something radically original, and at the same time so very masterly in his playing, that one can call him a truly perfect virtuoso; and as I love and rejoice in all kinds of perfection this has been a most agreeable day for me. . . . It was a pleasure for me to be once more with a proper musician, not with these half virtuosos and half-classics who would fain unite in music *les honneurs de la vertu et les plaisirs du vice*, but with one who has his perfectly defined style. And even if it is as far from my own as heaven from earth, I can get on with it splendidly – only not with these half-folk. Sunday evening brought a strange experience – I had to play him my oratorio while inquisitive Leipzigers pushed in on the sly in order to have seen Chopin; then between the first and second parts he dashed off his new *Études* and a new Concerto to the astonished Leipzigers, then I went on with my *St. Paul* – as if an Iroquois and a Kaffir had met and were conversing. He has also a very pretty new nocturne, of which I have remembered a good deal to play by heart to Paul [Felix's brother] for his pleasure. So we were merry together, and he promised in all seriousness to come back in the course of the winter if I would compose a new symphony and perform it in his honour. We both took our oath upon it before three witnesses, and we shall see if we both keep our word.

Mendelssohn, an amiable man and one not prone to jealousies, could never quite make up his mind over Chopin as a composer. He was willing to admit his originality, but he often found him discordant. Being himself so steeped in the classical form, he hated anything that pertained to Romanticism or that meant the breaking away from the rigid formulas of the great men of the past, and he was not sure whether Chopin knew his job. In a letter to Moscheles on February 7, 1835, he described some Mazurkas and other new pieces as 'so mannered that they are hard to stand'. In another letter, April 6, 1837, he tells Moscheles that he does not like Chopin's new things, 'and that is provoking'. On another occasion he remarks that 'the worst thing about Chopin is that one does not

know at times whether his music is right or wrong'. But about his playing he was always enthusiastic. He told Moscheles once that 'Chopin had more soul in his finger-tips than all Döhler has from top to toe'. The letter quoted above is full of admiration. He loved the playing for its delicacy and exquisite taste. Chopin and Mendelssohn had many points in common; both were small in stature, Chopin a little the smaller; both were gentle and unassuming; neither cared for noise; they both revelled in delicious sounds; and both were more effeminate than masculine in their tastes. Of the two, Mendelssohn was the kinder; Chopin could not bear most of Mendelssohn's music.

Schumann was impressed also. 'He plays just as he composes, that is, uniquely.' Of all critics who have published their opinions, Schumann stands out as the most musical, intellectually and emotionally. It was only natural, then, that he had the vision to discover the genius and the taste to admire the sincerity of Chopin's art.

On his return journey to Paris, Chopin made a short stay at Heidelberg with the father of his pupil Adolph Gutmann, who was to become such a valuable friend to his teacher in later days. From Heidelberg Chopin hurried back. He had been away from Paris too long. His purse was empty, his pupils were waiting for him (and they were a necessity), and the glamour of the concert season was too enticing for him to miss.

Among all the artists appearing during the season, the pianist Sigismund Thalberg stood out from the rest. Chopin had met Thalberg in Vienna in 1830, and had not been enamoured with his style of playing. He was the illegitimate son of a Royal Prince, Moritz Dietrichstein, and a Baroness von Wetzlar, and at that time was a youth of 18; and Chopin thought that his art was meretricious and that effect was his god. He was anxious to discover whether that glibness of youth and early success had developed into something better.

Thalberg was what is known as a prodigy. He was educated to be a diplomat, almost became a soldier, but his musical instincts, united with an attractive appearance, made triumphs easy, and he surrendered to the career that was ordained for him. Hummel was his first teacher, but after successful tours in England and Germany he had further lessons in Paris from

Kalkbrenner and Pixis. 1835 was the year of his début in Paris, and so enthusiastic was his reception that two factions were formed, the Lisztians and the Thalbergians. Fétis championed the Viennese, Berlioz the Hungarian, and so the battle raged. Berlioz had to be on Liszt's side, for they were the harbingers of the new spirit in music, the heralds of realism in sound, and Fétis had been brought up in the old ideas and well schooled by Kalkbrenner. The outstanding feature of Thalberg's playing was his sonorous legato melody in the middle of the instrument, with big basses and florid trebles, as if three hands were playing. He thoroughly understood the possibilities of the sustaining pedal and exploited them to the utmost. His scale passages had a scintillating brilliance, even, clear, with a semi-staccato pearliness. Great beauty of tone was always aimed at, and rough and hard noises were never heard. What he lacked was sensitiveness and poetry. He had sensuousness, hence his success, but he had not the soul of an artist. He was indeed an aristocrat, most elegant and charming. His manner at the pianoforte was restrained to a degree, and no exterior show was used to beguile the public. He visited England several times on his travels, made a great deal of money, married the widow of the painter Boucher, the daughter of Lablache, and finally settled down to cultivate, not his garden, but his vines. He died at the age of 59.

As a composer Thalberg has long since joined the myriads whose works are never heard. His compositions, which totalled eighty-three, were chiefly conceived for the pianoforte, and included many florid arrangements of melodies from popular operas; the remainder consisted of songs, and two operas. The style of his pianoforte music was dead almost at its birth. For this great blessing Chopin was chiefly responsible, and if only for this would deserve our gratitude. Pause to consider a moment, and you will realize that, at that period, there was real music and pianoforte music. And the real music, that of the classical masters, was rarely played, whereas those terrible contraptions labelled *Grande Fantaisie*, *Morceau de Concert*, *Grande Valse brillante*, *Souvenir de quelque-chose*, *Grand Divertissement*, etc., were the only pieces that the public would pay to hear. Look at the programmes of the pianists at the time of the advent of Chopin

and Liszt. Look at the programmes of Liszt himself before Schumann and Chopin converted him by their originality and greatness. If the pianists were not playing arrangements of the tunes of the day by themselves or their masters, they were playing studies by Clementi, Czerny, Cramer, Kalkbrenner and Herz. Bach was hardly known. Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven had reputations, but the public would not listen to them. We must return to the conclusion that Chopin primarily, ably seconded by Liszt and Schumann, was responsible for altering and (Heaven be praised) cultivating the musical taste of their epoch. Once the concert-going public became used to the new sounds it was easy to carry on, for the ear quickly assimilates what the brain advises. The victory was completely won from the first moment, and no attempt has been made since to bring back those positively dreadful abortions.

This changed attitude of the public, due so much to Chopin's conquest of the cultured people in Paris, was the cause of Liszt's eventual victory over his popular rival. Thalberg must have been a fine pianist from every aspect, but his material was all wrong. The advent of Romanticism sounded the death-knell of meretricious monotony. Pianoforte music only needed the arrival of someone with fresh and original ideas to follow the lead of its sister arts and become a living thing of beauty, instead of an unending flow of flourishes. The shy and delicate Pole appeared from nowhere. His was the music that was needed. Naturally, the artistry of Thalberg could not be obliterated in a day, and he amassed a fortune on his tours, which took him as far afield as Brazil; but he became completely overshadowed by Liszt, and eventually retired from the concert arena. He had all the polish and glamour, the fascination and sensuousness necessary; but his success was not lasting. His type has every degree of talent, but rarely does it possess genius. And it was just the possession of the last indefinable quality that enabled Liszt, like Paganini, to ride over the heads of all his brother artists. Time is the only sister of greatness; the name of Thalberg is dead, that of Liszt will live.

Heine wrote an essay on Berlioz, Liszt and Chopin, dated 1837, which is most illuminating in its comments on the two

pianists, Liszt and Thalberg. Heine was discerning, and admired Thalberg's art. He wrote as follows:

You doubtless know to satiety, from the newspapers, of the unfortunate estrangement which exists between Liszt and the Viennese pianist Thalberg, and of the commotion which an article by Liszt against Thalberg created in the musical world, also of the *rôle* which lurking enmities and gossipings have played alike to the detriment of the critic and the criticised. At the very height of this scandalous strife the two heroes of the day determined to play at the same concert, one after the other. They both set aside their wounded private feelings in the furtherance of a scheme of benevolence; and the public, to whom they thus gave the opportunity of contemporaneously recognizing and appreciating their particular diversities, accorded to them a generous and merited approbation.

It is, indeed, sufficient to make a single comparison between the musical temperament of each composer, to be convinced that there is as much of hidden malice as of the narrowness of mind in the endeavour to praise one at the expense of the other. Their technical proficiencies counterbalance one another; and as regards their spiritual character, no more striking contrast could be imagined than the noble, soulful, intelligent, good-natured German, or, rather, Austrian Thalberg, face to face with the wild, lightning-flashing, volcanic, heaven-storming Liszt.

Franz Liszt was still more of a prodigy than either Chopin or Thalberg. The foundation of his playing was laid by Czerny. As a boy he was unanimously acclaimed in both Pesth and Vienna, and in 1823 went to Paris. Cherubini refused him admittance to the Conservatoire in Paris because of his foreign birth – an action that he must have regretted later. In 1824 and 1825 he appeared in London and Manchester, and repeated these visits two years later. He then settled down in Paris and became a member of the band of leaders of the Romantic movement. The liaison between Liszt and Marie d'Agoult led later to their living in Geneva, and from there Liszt made his concert tours. While in Geneva he heard of the Parisians acclaiming Thalberg as 'the first player in the world, the founder and herald of a new era in pianoforte music'. This

news annoyed him intensely. Nothing could keep him away from Paris. When he arrived there he found that Thalberg had fled to Vienna. Immediately he announced two recitals, at one of which he played the '*Hammerclavier*' Sonata, Op. 106, of Beethoven. Would this feat silence the chatterers? Liszt well knew that the Viennese pianist could not essay the gigantic. In a letter to Marie d'Agoult in February 1837 he expressed himself in no pleasant manner about Thalberg's playing:

I have just heard Thalberg: in truth, I am completely mystified. Of all the things pronounced superior, this is assuredly the most mediocre I know. His last piece (recently composed) on 'God save the King' is even well below the mediocre. I said to Chopin: 'He is a *grand seigneur manqué* who makes an artist still more *manqué*'.

Not satisfied with the Paris victory, Liszt shut himself up for 'a whole afternoon to study conscientiously' the works of Thalberg. Perhaps after all he had a new message to deliver to the world, but Liszt wrote to George Sand on April 3, 1837: 'The result was diametrically opposed to what I expected. One thing alone astonished me – that such mediocre, insignificant compositions should have produced such universal effect. From this I concluded that the composer's style of execution must be something very extraordinary. I expressed these views in the *Gazette musicale* . . .' The expression of these views was not politic and raised a bitter controversy. Sides were taken; the respective champions hurled vitriolic retorts at each other which only ceased when it became known that Liszt had met Thalberg and explained his attitude. 'It gave me pleasure to be able warmly to praise his powers of execution, and he, better than anyone, understood the loyalty and sincerity of my behaviour.'

Liszt was attracted to Weimar in 1842, but not until 1849 did he make it his headquarters. For twelve years he remained there, conducting, composing, teaching, writing; and by his efforts this old Saxon town became the centre of musical life in Germany. His last recital for monetary gain was in 1847, the few public appearances he made after this being for charity. Liszt was too intelligent to waste his time with the hours of

daily routine that are compulsory for note-perfection. Eagerness and energy were his main characteristics, and these could not be squandered upon hours of finger drill. He was probably the greatest sight-reader that ever lived, besides being gifted with a phenomenal memory. On these endowments he relied more and more as he grew older. Mendelssohn was made aware of his extraordinary sight-reading when showing him the manuscript of his *G minor Concerto*. 'Though it was hardly legible, he played it off at sight in the most perfect manner, better than anybody else could possibly play it—quite marvellously.' Hiller, to whom this was said, confessed that he was not surprised, having long known from experience that Liszt played most things best the first time, because they gave him enough to do. The second time he always had to add something for his own satisfaction. This 'adding something' became chronic with him, and was often the source of great annoyance to Chopin.

In 1847 Liszt became acquainted with the Princess de Sayn-Wittgenstein, with whom he shared most of the rest of his life. He made another tour in England in 1840, but, curiously, with small success. Not until the last year of his life, 1886, did he revisit this country. It was for a performance of his oratorio *St. Elizabeth*, and the ovation he received was unprecedented. He had luncheon with Queen Victoria, and was lionized wherever he went. That was in the first week in April; on the last day of the following July he was dead.

Liszt is one of the world's most remarkable men. As pianist, composer, conductor, innovator, propagandist, lover, friend, he was a master. He could not be small in anything he attempted. All his life he had dabbled with varying forms of religion, so that when in 1879 he was allowed to receive the tonsure and to hold four minor offices, carrying with them the honorary title of a canon of the Church of Rome, he felt the complete fulfilment of life's endeavours. Henceforward he was known as the Abbé Liszt, and wore a cassock, though he could never function in any capacity as a priest. His must have been a wonderful personality – magnetic, persuasive, benedictory. His charitable gifts were legion. No musician worthy of the name was ever refused help or encouragement. Many of the best composers

who have succeeded him owe more than they could afford to admit to his wisdom, advice and innovations. Although not comparable to Chopin as the creator of a new school of piano-forte writing, his influence has been momentous. He is generally credited with the birth of the Symphonic Poem. Few composers have excelled him in orchestral colour, and modern orchestral composers will continue to copy his effects. He had superlative gifts and true generosity of heart, but one cannot always be sure of his sincerity, for his idolatry of the extravagant, his love of public acclamation, and the theatrical embellishment of every action often cloud his virtues.

Of the sincerity of his admiration for both the playing and the compositions of Chopin, however, there can be no doubt. From the first he was captivated by the playing of the young Pole. Its delicacy appealed to him like the petals of the most precious flower. Its perfection was as fragile as the thinnest porcelain, its message as tender as the softest whisper. Liszt spoke of Chopin as 'the pianist of sentiment *par excellence*. Nothing equals his lightness and sweetness of touch, nothing can again be compared with the originality, distinction and charm of his works. He is an exceptional pianist, who cannot be, and should not be, compared with anyone'. In a letter to W. von Lenz in 1872, he wrote:

You exaggerate, I think, the influence which the Parisian *salons* exercised on Chopin. His soul was not in the least affected by them, and his work as an artist remains transparent, marvellous, ethereal, and of an incomparable genius – quite outside the errors of a school and the silly trifling of a *salon*. He is akin to the angel and the fairy; more than this, he sets in motion the heroic string, which has nowhere else vibrated with so much grandeur, passion and fresh energy as in his Polonaises.

In spite of their opposite temperaments, and the difference in their tastes, they were fast friends. Liszt annoyed Chopin very considerably a few years later. He was nothing if not self-assured. Presuming on Chopin's friendship, and taking advantage of his absence from home, Liszt made use of his rooms for an assignation with a lady. Chopin, on his return, found general disorder and stray hairpins. Although Chopin has become

notorious as the lover of George Sand, the world does not realize that he was prudish to a degree: he could not condone such a flagrant breach of good manners, and although Liszt asserted that Chopin could 'forgive nobly', this was an action that he could never overlook. It is only fair to say that Liszt's friends strenuously denied this story, saying that Liszt was incapable of such behaviour. But the fact remains that he and Chopin did not meet again, though one must remember that Liszt no longer made Paris his home. In 1850 Liszt wrote a *Life of Chopin*, which for all its flamboyancy and highflown utterances, remains a significant gesture and a monument of love to the memory of the genius he truly admired and was among the first to acclaim.

After saying *adieu* to Marie Wodzinska for the second and last time at Dresden in 1836, Chopin went again to Leipzig where he had promised to meet Schumann. The latter had begged Chopin to accept Mendelssohn's invitation to the Düsseldorf Festival, adding a postscript to Mendelssohn's letter full of enthusiastic greetings and wishes for the reunion. Neither of them made the journey, however, Chopin being too occupied with thoughts of Marie, preferring her company to meeting the musicians on the Rhine. When he reappeared in Leipzig at Schumann's house on September 12 he was greeted like a lost brother. To show Schumann's pleasure over Chopin's visit, let us read his letter of September 14 to his old professor, Heinrich Dorn.

The day before yesterday, just after I had received your letter and was going to answer it, who should enter? – Chopin. This was a great pleasure. We passed a very happy day together and yesterday we held an after-celebration. . . . I have a new *Ballade* by Chopin [in G minor, Op. 23]. It appears to me the work which shows most genius; and I told him that I liked it the best of all his works. After long meditation, he said very feelingly: 'I am glad of that, for it is the one which I prefer also'. He played to me also some new *études*, nocturnes and mazurkas, all of which were incomparable. You would like him extremely. But I think that Clara is a greater virtuoso, and interprets his work with deeper insight. [Schumann was very much in love, so he had to add this.]

Chopin again paid a visit to Henrietta Voigt. She and her

husband kept open house for itinerant musicians and were visited by all the famous ones. She wrote in her diary on September 13:

Chopin was here yesterday and played on my pianoforte for an hour – a fantasia and a new étude. He is an interesting man and still more interesting when he plays. His playing made me catch my breath. Marvellous is the ease with which he glides over the keys, his velvet fingers appear to fly. He transported me in a way unknown to me before. It was his childlike simplicity and naturalness of manner whilst playing which chiefly delighted me.

From Leipzig Chopin set off for Paris, again staying at Heidelberg for a day or two on his way with the Gutmanns.

It was during the winter season of 1836–7 that Chopin first met George Sand – the woman who altered his whole life and his conception of it, and who was more responsible than anyone for the dislocation of his entire mental and physical state. As has already been suggested, his mind was in a turmoil, uncontrolled and purposeless, his soul aching for consolation and love, his body needing care and attention. His health was going to pieces and causing his parents and intimate friends grave concern. His father had written in great perturbation about it to him on January 9, 1836, with a further letter to Jan Matuszynski asking him to keep the family informed about Frédéric's condition of health and thanking him for insisting on Frédéric wearing thicker shoes. He begged Jan to make him go to bed earlier, 'not at 2 a.m. which is all right for automatons, but not for those who think and work with their brains'. All through the year Chopin had been working hard, both at his compositions and his lessons, and with the added disquiet caused by his love for Marie, his physical resistance was giving way. It is only natural that he should have succumbed to the *tendresses* of an able woman like George Sand, although her victory was not easy at first.

The earlier biographers such as Karasowski and Wodzinski have given 1837 as the year of their first meeting. The more recent writers have quoted 1836, and after much research it has been proved that they first met towards the end of the

earlier year. Wladimir Karénine (pseudonym of Madame Komarova), in her formidable *George Sand, sa vie et ses œuvres* (1899-1926, 4 vols.), says:

The first meeting of Chopin and George Sand *did not take place* in 1837, as is always said, and took place in circumstances quite different from and by no means so poetic as those described by MM. de Custine, Karasowski, Wodzinski and *tutti quanti*. In analysing these legends we have said that the meeting took place in the last months of 1836, at the time when Madame d'Agoult and George Sand lived at the Hotel de France, Rue Laffitte, and that in the winter months of 1836 which George Sand spent in Paris, between her journey in Switzerland and her seclusion at Nohant (January-April 1837), she and Chopin saw each other not 'once' but many times, either in the *salon* of the Countess or *chez* Chopin himself, at his intimate musical *soirées* that are incomparably described by Heinrich Heine in his letters to Lewald, of which Liszt speaks in his book on Chopin, and to which George Sand herself alludes in her *Histoire de ma Vie*.

This finally disposes of the various legends which have been thrust at hungry readers in the past by 'romantic' writers who adore being dubbed 'poetic'. Fabrications and biographies should be as wide apart as the poles, but it is curious what a vogue such romancers have enjoyed in writing of famous people.

Before Chopin was to become entangled, however, in a *liaison* that was to last ten years, two of his friends persuaded him to accompany them to London. These friends were Camille Pleyel and Stanislas Kozmian, the former the proprietor of the famous pianoforte house, the latter a friend of Frédéric's youth. They arrived in London on July 11, 1837, and his passport proves that he reached Dieppe on his homeward journey on July 28. During his stay Chopin was introduced to James Broadwood, head of the chief pianoforte firm in England, and, as Monsieur Fritz, was invited with his friends to dinner by Mr. Broadwood at 46 Bryanston Square. After dinner the incognito was discovered. Chopin could not resist trying the pianoforte, and his touch gave him away, the ladies present finding him out.

POLICE GÉNÉRALE  
DE FRANCE

Passe-port  
à l'étranger,  
valable pour un an.



DÉPARTEMENT

Régistre 36  
n. 3/46

SIGNALEMENT

Âge de 26 ans

taille d'un mètre

70 centimètres  
1 pied  
cheveux bruns  
yeux gris  
nez droit  
lèvres roses  
barbe  
moustaches  
dents  
signe

1875-1876-1877-1878

Signature du Porteur

*[Signature]*

Passe-port à l'Étranger,  
Valable pour un an.

AU NOM DU ROI,

Nous *Pift. D. L.*

Requerrons les Autorités civiles et militaires du Royaume, et  
personnes les Autorités civiles et militaires des États amis ou alliés de  
la France, de laisser passer librement Monsieur  
*Chopin* fils de *Chopin* fils de *Chopin*  
né le 20 mars 1851 à Paris  
demeurant à Paris 16<sup>e</sup> rue de la Harpe 38.  
allant en Angleterre  
et de lui donner aide et protection en cas de besoin.

Le présent Passe-port est valable pendant  
pour sortir du Royaume.

Fait à Paris le 6 juillet 1877  
Le *Pift. D. L.*

*[Signature]* le 6 *[Signature]*

Le Secrétaire général,


*[Signature]*

Paris le 6 juillet 1877

N<sup>o</sup>. 6312. Gracie  
 En a l'ambassade de France  
 Londres le 17 juillet 1837  
 Pour pour Dardiche  
 La Chancellerie de l'ambassade  
 Alfred Deland



Visé: H. de la Haye, H. de la Haye, H. de la Haye  
 Le 17 juillet 1837  
 Le Chef des Bureaux de la Légation

D. Lamière  


re passez avec à Paris  
 Signé et pourvu  
 Reçu par l'ambassadeur



*[Signature]*

CHOPIN'S PASSPORT FOR HIS FIRST VISIT TO ENGLAND, DATED  
 JULY 7, 1837

Chopin did not play in public during his stay in London; he even refused to visit anyone. Mrs. Moscheles supports this in a letter which is included in the *Life of Moscheles* as follows:

Chopin, who spent a few days in London, was the only one of the foreign artists who did not go out, and wished no one to visit him, for the effort of talking told on his consumptive frame. He heard a few concerts and disappeared.

Mendelssohn wrote to Hiller from London on September 1:

It seems that Chopin came over here quite suddenly a fortnight ago [*sic*], paid no visits and saw nobody, played very beautifully at Broadwood's one evening, and then took himself off again. They say he is still very ill and miserable.

One can imagine his dejection. He was always a hypochondriac, but now he had good cause to be even without hope. Burdened with two maladies instead of one, life appeared valueless to him. Had it not been for the music that filled his head, the melodies that kept on recurring and had to be noted down and then turned over and over again to assume the right shape, he doubtless would have surrendered his life quite willingly. But these inspirations kept him going. Before long his life was no longer to be his own. It was to be swept up by this astounding man-woman. His years of greatest fertility were to come — his hours of greatest sorrow.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GEORGE SAND

ONE could not imagine any genealogy more picturesque for a writer of romances than that of George Sand, or, to give her her correct name, Aurore Dudevant, *née* Dupin. Her great-grandfather, the Maréchal Maurice de Saxe, was a general in the service of Louis XV, and one of the few victorious generals of that worthless monarch. Born in 1696, he was the bastard son of Augustus II of Saxony, who was also King of Poland, and of Countess Aurora von Königsmark, a Swede; therefore he was not a Frenchman. After fighting with Marlborough against Louis XIV, then with the Russo-Polish army, and then against the Turks under Prince Eugène, he, as Duke of Courland, switched round and became the enemy of his former allies. After this he was created a Marshal of France, and successfully fought many battles, thrice defeating the Duke of Cumberland. He was just as successful in his battles with women. A certain well-known Parisian actress, Mlle de Verrières, was one of his victims, and by her a daughter was born who became Madame Sand's grandmother. This daughter, when very young, was married to the Comte de Horn, a natural son of Louis XV. Fifteen years after the early death of the Count, the still young widow remarried, this time a rich and elderly man, M. Dupin de Francueil. M. Dupin inherited the Château de Chenonceaux, and is credited with being a remarkable figure in pre-Revolution days. He was not of noble birth, but at least he was respectably born. One son resulted from this ill-matched, but apparently happy marriage, Maurice François Dupin. Then came the Revolution and with it the loss of most of Madame Dupin's fortune. With what was left the widow bought a small property in Berry which was to become famous as the Château de Nohant. It was not a château to be compared with the magnificent *châteaux* of the Loire, but it sufficed for her to bring up her son and continue to be a lady of quality. The son entered the army of Napoleon, saw service in the

Italian campaigns in Lombardy and returned a lieutenant and an aide-de-camp to a general.

During these campaigns he fell in love with a girl who had followed another French officer to Italy. She reciprocated his affection, and they returned to France together, to the bitter annoyance of Madame Dupin. The girl, whose name was Sophie Victoire Antoinette Delaborde, was the daughter of a birdseller, a veritable child of the streets – as George Sand herself says, an '*enfant du vieux pavé de Paris*'. Several children were born, of whom only one lived, before the officer and the birdseller's daughter decided to marry. A month later another daughter, Aurore, was born, who was destined to become one of the most popular writers France has produced. The chagrin of the old mother can well be imagined. That a son of hers, of Royal blood and great traditions, should take as wife a daughter of the people was beyond her comprehension.

If ever a pedigree was abnormal it was this one. George Sand's great-grandfather was illegitimate, her grandmother was illegitimate. This grandmother was unnaturally married at fifteen, and still more unnaturally at thirty to a husband of seventy. Then the only child of this strange union married the runaway mistress of another man. George Sand's vividness could never have conceived a more thrilling ancestry. To complete the glorious breaking of social conventions, M. Dudevant, her husband, was a bastard son of Baron Dudevant, a retired colonel and Officer of the Legion of Honour, whilst Aurore's own mother had two illegitimate children by her former lover before becoming intimate with Maurice Dupin. Is it any wonder then that a great many of her books, and those which so quickly made her reputation, were concerned with women's equal rights in what is vulgarly known as free love? As we shall see, her weakest point was her creative faculty. She needed an incentive, a subject to imitate, an example to allow her imagination verbosely to run riot. Her own pedigree was an example ready made.

Aurore Dupin was born in Paris on July 1, 1804. At her birth she was placed in the arms of her grandmother, which ruse was successful in reconciling Madame Dupin to her son

and assuaging the wrathful feelings against his wife. Soon after his return from the Peninsular Wars, where he was aide-de-camp to Murat, Maurice Dupin was killed through a fall from his horse. Aurore was just four years old. Her mother could not keep her, for she was now completely dependent on the mother-in-law. After two years of bitter squabbling, it was arranged that the little girl should live at Nohant under the guidance of her grandmother and that the mother should live on an allowance in Paris. The whole story of her early years has been splendidly told by George Sand herself in her *Histoire de ma Vie*, which curiously uneven work has outlasted most of her 109 volumes. One of her gifts was her memory for detail, particularly that concerning her childhood, another her power of describing the beauties of nature; and it is these gifts which have contributed more than anything else to keep her autobiography alive.

At the age of three she crossed the border into Spain and lived with her father in the Royal Palace in Madrid where he was on Murat's staff. She remembers being dressed in full uniform to please the Marshal. For the next ten years she was mostly at Nohant with the old grandmother. It was during these years that her love for the country and everything pertaining to it was developed. All her life she adored its freshness and freedom, the running streams, the hedges, the trees, the smells, the fauna, the peasants, the solitude. She knew enough to satisfy any naturalist, and this knowledge was the background of her stories. If she could have painted the characters of her associates half as well as she did the peasants and their surroundings she would not mainly be known as the most prolific authoress in literature.

Her education, otherwise, was of the flimsiest. There was an ex-abbé living in the château who managed the affairs of the grandmother and who had been tutor to Maurice Dupin. His services were called in to help shape this unruly child of seven, but he quickly realized the thanklessness of his task. It did not worry him much, however, for he had come under the spell of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and believed that the simplicity of nature was the best education. Aurore tried to learn some Latin and music, but she had no liking for concentration.

Botany and simple science were more akin to her nature, and her groundings in these were useful. Just before reaching her teens she became obsessed with a half-pagan, half-Christian god of her own invention called Corambé; the obsession grew until her grandmother was prevailed upon to send her to a convent. Old Madame Dupin was born a Roman Catholic, but her thoughts had outgrown the narrow conceptions of the Church. Her agnosticism could not prompt her charge to study the Bible, nor had she any inclination to talk to the child on religious matters. This sudden desire for religion on Aurore's part was a great shock, but the girl was adamant and her self-will already apparent, so she had her way.

For the next two years, from thirteen to fifteen, Aurore was shut up in the convent of the English Augustinians in Paris, not once being allowed outside the walls. She has written very feelingly and volubly about her first reactions to this Spartan existence:

I was so filled with gratitude and joy that the tears rolled down my cheeks. I felt as before that I loved God, that my mind embraced and accepted that ideal of justice, tenderness and holiness, which I had never doubted, but with which I had never held direct communion, and now at last I felt that this communion was consummated, as though an invincible barrier had been broken down between the source of infinite light and the smouldering fire of my heart.

The conversion did not last long. Aurore's love of the beauties of life were too strongly rooted to be cast aside for ever. But the groundings in religion were to be of avail in her later novels. After she had raked up everything she could about herself and her friends and her enemies, and had described every blade of grass and nook and cranny not only in Berry, but in most other parts of France, she fell back on religious mysticism, and even dabbled in metaphysics.

At school she did not prove herself clever, and left without any marks of distinction. Her religious fervour died down, although she continued to harbour the idea of taking the veil. This was by no means in accordance with the grandmother's wishes, so that when Aurore returned to Nohant in 1820 she

was given complete freedom to ride and roam at random. A half-brother, Hippolyte Chatiron, was often a companion, and she would shoot with the Abbé Deschartres. But what pleased her most was mingling with the peasants. From them she would hear all the local scandal, all their pursuits and tales and troubles. Tales of witches and ghosts fascinated her and provided a stock-in-trade for the future. This life quickly obliterated all desire to become a nun. When her grandmother died on December 25, 1821, Aurore had grown up to womanhood, with a care-free disregard for conventions and an abhorrence of everything effeminate.

At her grandmother's death she inherited her small fortune and the château at Nohant. Then followed a period of trouble, chiefly brought about by her wilful disinclination to please the family. She quarrelled with all the members of her father's family and all the stragglers of the royalty to which she laid claim. Her determination to stick by her mother – one of her more admirable traits – led inevitably to friction with her father's relatives. The perversity of her nature caused a reaction to a state of mind alienated from her professed scruples. She married. It was not a *mariage de convenance* in the true French fashion, but a determined decision. On September 10, 1822, she became the wife of Casimir Dudevant, a thin young man of 27, who was of pleasing appearance and had been a junior officer in the army, which profession he abandoned for the more cultured and perhaps more remunerative one of the law. He never practised as a barrister, and this, maybe, was the cause of his downfall; but the choice proves a certain education.

Although the marriage was willing on both sides there was no question of love or even passion between them. They decided that friendship should be the basis of their happiness – a very questionable and risky proceeding. However, the following June, a son, Maurice, was born, followed in 1828 by a daughter, Solange. Up till then their conjugal life would have passed inspection, though not microscopic. Madame Dudevant insisted on friendships with other men, not illicit at all, but sufficiently intimate to generate jealousies and cause upheavals. Her intelligence was expanding and needed culture, her hus-

band's was deteriorating and preferred turnips. The dreaded rift was apparent to their acquaintances, and it quite naturally widened. From turnips her husband's taste turned to drink, goaded on by the half-brother Hippolyte (her father's premarital indiscretion), and then to protesting his love for the maids of the house. This was too much for Aurore. She was clever enough to combat jealousy, for she knew she had given no cause for it; but dissoluteness she would not condone. Her father-in-law, Colonel Dudevant, had died in 1826, and without his intervening influence there was no hope. But she did not know how to arrange the financial side – always the problem in domestic breakings-up – particularly as she owned the property and provided most of the cash. Her vitality was enormous – of this she had always been conscious – and she felt she should be able to find an outlet for it in some way that would enable her to earn her living. Though her life had so far been free from financial worry she knew that her tastes were inexpensive, and that she could readily live on very little if forced to. To her chagrin she became aware of her total incompetence to do anything well enough to earn sufficient to maintain herself. Her attempts at water-colour drawings and portraits, as well as crayon, were unsuccessful. These she abandoned for work-boxes, fans, and decorating bric-à-brac with birds and animals, but the return from these was disappointing also. Needlework only brought in a mere pittance, and the formation of any kind of business needed an outlay of capital which was beyond her reach. In exasperation she thought of literature. She had never attempted to write, and was convinced that she was no more fitted for that vocation than for any other; but it meant Paris and freedom, and this was too formidable an appeal to be resisted.

Her migration took place early in 1831. It was during the foregoing three years of doubt and difficulty that the surreptitious discovery in a drawer of a packet addressed to her by her husband determined her to regain her freedom. In October 1829, when the little Maurice was in his seventh year, a young man of twenty, Jules Boucoiran, was engaged as his tutor. By the month following he was being addressed as 'My dear Jules', and four months later as 'My dear boy'. The letters to him are

no longer formal in style, and though one cannot say that they are sufficiently intimate to be love-letters, they are full of extremely friendly expressions. On December 3, 1830, she wrote to him at Paris from Nohant giving him

a piece of news, wonderful, surprising, amazing. . . . While looking for something in my husband's desk I simply found a parcel addressed to me. That parcel had a kind of solemn appearance which struck me. It bore the inscription: '*To be opened only at my death*'.

Her impatience compelled her to open it. She excused her inquisitiveness by imagining that M. Dudevant was dead, and deeming this to be his will.

Good heavens! what a will! Curses for me and nothing else. He had collected therein all his impulses of temper and ill-humour against me, all his reflections concerning my *perverseness*, all his feelings of contempt for my character. And that is what he had left me as a token of his affection! . . . Without delaying a single day, though weak and sickly still, I informed him of my decision and enumerated my motives for so acting, with a cold-blooded audacity which petrified him. He scarcely expected that a being like me could muster enough spirit and nerve to thwart his designs. He scolded, rebuked and entreated me. I remained unshakable. *I must have an alimony. I shall go to Paris, my children shall stay at Nohant.*

The next month she installed herself in Paris with an allowance of £120 a year, on condition that she would spend half the year at Nohant. In 1832 Solange joined her in Paris. Boucoiran remained at Nohant as tutor until 1833, when his charge was sent to a boarding-school.

The allowance was quickly found to be insufficient to satisfy Aurore's needs, although she prided herself on her plebeian tastes; and her circumstances forced her once again to seek some form of livelihood. She was quite a good English scholar, for most of the nuns at the convent had been English and had taught her well, and at first she tried translation. This has always been a badly paid vocation – a fact she soon discovered. At dressmaking and millinery she earned fivepence for each

working day of sixteen to eighteen hours, according to her own statement in the *Histoire de ma Vie*. After tiring of this wretched occupation, she again contemplated her painting and decorating, only to find that hand-painted snuff-boxes, etc., had gone out of fashion. It was during this period of poverty that she conceived the idea of wearing men's clothes; they would be cheaper to buy, last longer and stand up better to the rain and slush. She bought herself a complete suit of inexpensive cloth, a large artist's tie, and labourer's boots with iron toecaps. Throughout her life she had given scant attention to her outward appearance, so this transformation had no terrors for her.

In 1830 she had met at Nohant a young man named Jules Sandeau. She had liked him and had been attracted by his high ideals and nobility of thought. At the moment he was studying law in Paris. Madame Dudevant told him of her poverty and of her unsuccessful attempts at earning money, and asked him if he could suggest any way of alleviating her desperate straits. Literature was advised. This, though not an entirely novel idea, was, she thought, beyond her capabilities. The outcome of the talk was that they decided to collaborate in an article for the newspaper *Figaro*. The editor, Henri Delatouche, came from Berry, their own district, and sympathetically accepted the article. It was a success, and more were demanded, and a joint story, *Prima Donna*, signed 'Jules Sand', appeared in the *Revue de Paris*. Meanwhile Aurore Dudevant endeavoured to become a journalist, but she lacked wit and compactness, and at the end of a month she admits to having earned fifteen francs. Her only chance was collaborating with Sandeau, and they decided to attempt a novel. *Rose et Blanche* was the quick outcome of their efforts, for which they received the large sum of 400 francs.

The alliance was not only literary. Sandeau was then only twenty, seven years younger than his partner, but this did not prevent them from becoming lovers. We find the first evidence of George Sand's gift for self-excuse in her writing of this *liaison*. 'I resisted him for three months but then yielded; I lived in my own apartment in an unconventional style.' They were encouraged to write another novel under the same pseudonym of Jules Sand, her contribution to be written during her three

months' stay at Nohant with the children. She duly arrived back in Paris, only to find that Sandeau had not written a word. This was extremely mortifying, but her disappointment was soon appeased when she heard her would-be joint author exclaiming in wonderment over her manuscript. 'You have written a masterpiece.' Her good heart prompted her to insist on its being signed Jules Sand as before, but her partner would not hear of this. He could not steal her glory from her. Not even the pleadings of M. Delatouche could alter his decision. It was then that the editor had an inspiration. 'Why not stick to the name of Sand? As to-day is St. George's Day, call yourself George, that will solve the whole difficulty.' The book was published as *Indiana*, the authoress was paid 600 francs for it, and very soon the name of George Sand was heard everywhere. Sainte-Beuve wrote of her in the *Globe* that the young author had struck a new and original vein and was destined to go far. M. Delatouche withdrew all the reproaches he had made about her lack of ability. Two journals, the *Revue de Paris* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, retained her for regular articles. She need have no more qualms about the financial future.

The affair with Sandeau did not survive much more than a year. Neither of the two could ever have been happy with the other. Aurore pretended to be heartbroken, and wrote to Sainte-Beuve: 'My heart is a cemetery'. When Jules heard of this remark his only comment was 'A necropolis'. In 1839 he wrote *Marianna*, in which he painted quite a good picture of George Sand. He had no regrets, neither had she. She had too much masculinity to be the woman of any man, however admiring he was of her talents. It would have been impossible for her to subjugate herself, even if the man were the most brilliant of his time. Her own personality had to be uppermost. She had to be either mother or master; being a mistress did not suit her taste at all. We must, therefore, not hold Casimir Dudevant too responsible for his wife's desertion: she would willingly have run away from anyone at that moment, or at any other moment, if it suited her purpose. In *Indiana* she repaid her husband with compound interest for his foolish letters; for she made free observations on sexual relationships, and exposed her personal experiences of marital life.

In spite of her masculine antagonism to femininity she hated being alone. After Sandeau's dismissal she cast her eyes around for another companion. Ironically she would assert that she was hard to please, though it is difficult to reconcile such a statement with subsequent facts. Prosper Mérimée was fortunate enough to gain a week's trial, but as neither nature would give way, he had his *congé*.

In the late summer of 1833 Alfred de Musset and George Sand met. He was twenty-three, she in her thirtieth year. Paul de Musset, Alfred's brother, maintains that they met through Saint-Beuve's connivance at a dinner given to the contributors of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, George Sand being the only woman present. Their attraction was mutual and immediate. Very soon they became lovers, and in the glow of their passion decided that Paris could not contain them. During the winter their companionship was tried out at Fontainebleau; the trial proved successful, and Italy was chosen for their retreat. The poet's mother was angered at this *liaison*, for she had heard unpleasant stories about George Sand's mode of existence, and she refused to grant permission for such a project. The filial love of all Frenchmen was fully exemplified in Alfred, and he considered abandoning the trip. But George Sand decided to match her will against his mother's.

That very evening about nine o'clock [so writes Paul de Musset] my mother was informed that a lady was waiting at the door in a carriage and desired earnestly to speak to her. Accompanied by a servant my mother descended. The lady announced herself, and begged my mother to allow her to take care of her son, adding that she would bestow the attention and affection of a mother towards him. She even swore a vow to this effect when she saw that ordinary pleading was being unsuccessful. Eventually she had her way, the mother with tears of emotion reluctantly giving her consent.

The couple went to Venice, first to the Hotel Danieli and later to lodgings. For six weeks everything went wonderfully. Alfred's letters to his mother and family were regular and frequent. The lovers were exultant. But the hard-working George Sand could not live on love alone; she had work to do, and she

intended to do it. This was not in accordance with Alfred's ideas of a honeymoon, and soon the animated exposition of their souls gave way to quarrels and bickerings. If George Sand was going to write for eight hours a day, Alfred did not intend to sit and watch her, although he knew that she was the breadwinner; so he amused himself in cafés with other women. About the middle of February his letters home suddenly ceased and for six weeks nothing was heard of him. When on the point of leaving to find him the family received a pathetic note saying that he was on his way home, alone. He had been at death's door. On April 10 he arrived at his mother's house. Meanwhile George Sand had run off with the handsome Italian doctor, Pagello, who had been in attendance on Musset in Venice.

It is accepted nowadays that Musset's illness was aggravated by the heartless flirtations of his mistress and Dr. Pagello. In 1835 Musset wrote his *Confession d'un enfant du siècle*, and shortly after his death in 1857 the allegations it contained were answered by George Sand with *Elle et lui*. Both gave their versions—his poetic and gently insinuating, hers abusive and complaining of ill-treatment. This book of hers was vehemently replied to by the deceased's brother in a novel *Lui et elle*, which in turn brought forth another, *Lui*, by Louise Colet—a weak and trivial affair. Paul de Musset's book was supposed to be a detailed account told to him by his brother on his death-bed, and incriminates George Sand for her flagrant disloyalty. Alfred had accused her of unfaithfulness, and her retorts and subsequent still viler behaviour caused the mental breakdown. George Sand's answer to this was that the invalid made himself worse through hallucinations of her infidelity. We must be allowed to form our own judgement over the whole affair. Both were to blame, although we cannot excuse Madame Sand for deserting Musset in such a crisis.

This was not the end of the story. In the autumn of the same year, 1834, she cut off her hair and sent a lock of it to the poet as a token of repentance. They were together for a fortnight; after this he refused to see her, even on his death-bed. One cannot help feeling sympathetic towards George Sand, for she was the worker and had the practical vision. He was a

weakling—lazy, devoid of reasoning faculty, profligate and amoral—but with all the instincts and genius of a true poet. He would have tried the patience of a saint, and a saint she certainly was not. It is said that of all her lovers Alfred de Musset was the one she loved most, and that the rest of his life was blighted by the disaster of the Italian venture. His brother quotes a passage, according to Henry James, written by Alfred five years after the event, ‘in which he affirms that on his return to Paris he spent four months shut up in his room in incessant tears’. As a rule poets appear to thrive on imaginative sorrows and easily acquired gluts of emotion. Here was one who did sincerely suffer—and he did not thrive on it.

George Sand had realized that if she was to become an important figure she would have to be her own master; in other words, if she desired to be thought the equal of the great artists of the day she must be considered a man amongst them. Liszt, Meyerbeer, Berlioz, Delacroix, Heine—she must be free to talk and discuss with them. They were necessary for the elevation of her mind. Being somebody’s mistress took up too much of her time, tied her down to engagements and rendezvous, chained her thoughts into too narrow a groove. In ‘*Les Lettres d’un voyageur*’, which were published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* between 1834 and 1836, she attempts to picture herself.

I care little about growing old; I care far more not to grow old alone, but I have never met the being with whom I could have chosen to live and die, or if I ever met him I knew not how to keep him.

For a number of years she did not give herself a chance to grow old alone. Men may have been a nuisance, but they were a necessity.

The next victim to occupy her attentions over a period was a barrister, Michel de Bourges, someone entirely opposite to the unfortunate Musset. Not only had he the cold calculating brain of a lawyer, but he even despised artists, their work as well as their attitude towards life. George Sand was forced to take a back seat this time. He demanded that she should listen to him, and almost converted her to republicanism. For a while she

listened admiringly, but her adoration for the society of her artist friends, together with her almost insane ambition, the fulfilment of which she felt was being stifled, forced her to sever the intimacy. This took place half-way through the year 1836. Before the parting, her counsel-lover was able to procure her freedom from her husband. After much legal argument and several lawsuits, 40,000 francs vested in the funds were made over to M. Dudevant, and George Sand was given custody of the two children, on condition that they were allowed occasionally to visit their father.

The services of a new tutor were required, and a young man, Eugène Pelletan, was engaged. He shared the same fate as his predecessor, Boucoiran, George finding him sufficiently attractive for a while to take him as a lover.

It was during the autumn of 1835 that George Sand, through Franz Liszt, first became acquainted with the Countess d'Agoult, who had been Liszt's mistress for more than a year. Marie d'Agoult was the child of Count de Flavigny, who had married a widow, the daughter of a rich Jewish banker in Frankfurt, Simon Moritz von Bethmann. In 1827, at the age of twenty-two, she married Count d'Agoult, who was twenty years her senior, and by him had three children. She was rich, beautiful and ambitious. During the summer of 1834 Berlioz introduced Liszt to her *salon*. A sudden fascination developed with astonishing rapidity, and with it a scandal of the first magnitude. In August of the following year the two lovers left together for Geneva, which was to be their headquarters. Marie's ambitions were now to be put to the test. She had always wanted to become known as a writer, and here were freedom and opportunity. She chose the pen-name of Daniel Stern, but though her output was fairly prolific none of her works endures. This *liaison* was more or less in being for ten years, though only at the outset could it be called happy, for Liszt was too susceptible and too faithless to give peace to any woman. They had two daughters and a son, the younger daughter, Cosima, becoming the wife first of Hans von Bülow and secondly of Richard Wagner.

Towards the end of May 1840 Madame d'Agoult followed Liszt to London. This absurd proof of her jealousy was too

much for the applause-loving and snobbish Liszt. For a long time there had been tension between them, and the breaking-point had almost been reached. In June he wrote his *adieu*. But this was not final: the *liaison* lingered on spasmodically for another four years, until Lola Montez shattered any remaining illusions. Marie had put up with his reckless *amours*, but she could not reconcile herself to courtesans. She returned to her husband, shared with Liszt's mother the responsibility of educating the two daughters (the son, Daniel, having died young), wrote effusively, and became a political agitator. She died in 1876, in the same year as George Sand.

The friendship between George Sand and Marie d'Agoult did not last long. In 1835 the two women were living near each other in Paris, in the Rue Lafitte; and as each thought the other necessary for social or literary advancement, they quickly became friendly. At the beginning they were a little unkind towards each other, judging from George Sand's letters to Marie, the first of which is dated November 1, 1835; but by the spring they had become fast friends. The Countess was not quite sure about George's relationship with her beloved Franz in the early days, and did not thaw as quickly as George could have wished. Knowing the life and habits of Liszt and the colossal admiration he inspired in women, which he found no difficulty in reciprocating, we are not surprised. He was one of George's intellectual heroes; why should he not be a lover as well? But these jealousies were extinguished for a while, with the result that George was invited to have a holiday with them at Geneva.

During this visit the three friends, accompanied by a Swiss officer, Major Adolphe Pictet, made a tour to Chamonix and the Savoy Alps. An amusing account was written by Pictet in his book *Un Voyage à Chamounix*, published in 1838, and his descriptions of the two women help us to visualize them.

Arabella, the Countess d'Agoult, tall, blonde, elegant, gracious, her hair carefully dressed in long ringlets in the English style, serious, reserved; George Sand, an urchin sparkling with an inward fire that was scarcely controlled, an artist, always simple and free, careless over her dress; she was dressed

in a man's blouse, a cigar in her mouth, her thick black hair, which was parted in the middle, falling over her shoulders.

The party made various excursions, not without adventure, and appear to have been disturbing to their fellow-guests at the Hotel de l'Union by their din and the hilarity of their eloquence.

On their return to Paris from Switzerland the two women founded a *salon* in the Hotel de France, Rue Lafitte, which soon became the rendezvous for *littérateurs*, musicians, painters and other famous men. Chopin became a regular visitor to their *soirées musicales* during the winter of 1836-7. Liszt was again responsible. He seems to have been the instigator of everyone's misfortunes. His kindness was always at the service of others, but it unwittingly lent itself to mischief on many occasions. Alfred de Musset's sister was a pupil of Liszt, so this acquaintance was ready-made. Musset introduced George Sand to Liszt. Liszt introduced George Sand to Marie d'Agoult and then to Chopin. All these intimacies and friendships turned out wrong, and the most unfortunate was that between Chopin and George Sand.

Before proceeding further with George Sand's meeting and subsequent intimacy with Chopin, let us examine her character, her outlook on life, her excuses for her actions and her achievements, so that we can better formulate our opinion of her behaviour and her reactions to her new 'adopted' love.

Liszt attributed to her the power of 'second sight', a gift he imagined to be present in all highly endowed women. 'This power Madame Sand possesses by a double right—by the intuitions of her heart as well as by the vigour of her genius.' He wrote of her:

Brown, beauteous, olive-skinned; dark as Lara, as full of despair as Manfred, as rebellious as Cain, thou hast ranged through all the dark depths of solitude. Yet thou art more ferocious, more savage, more inconsolable than they, because thou hast never found a man's heart womanly enough to love thee as they were loved, to pay thee the homage of a blind and confiding submission to thy charms, to offer thee a mute though ardent devotion, to permit its obedience to be shielded and protected by thy Amazonian power.

He is speaking of *Lélia*, George Sand's third novel, written in 1833, in which she reflected the emotions and anxieties which she had felt during her intimacy with Musset, an intercourse which left an indelible impression. Liszt goes on:

When Madame Sand had blunted her chisel in polishing this statue, she sought in vain another form in which she might express the emotions which tortured her unsatiated soul. . . . After she had scorned man far more than Don Juan had degraded woman, she, in her '*Lettres d'un Voyageur*', portrays the shivering palsy and the painful lethargy which seizes upon the artist who has incorporated in his work the emotion which inspired him, and then finds that his imagination still remains under the spell of his unsatisfied ideal without being able to find another form in which he can incarnate it.

Chopin was exactly the type for which her soul was yearning – the ready-made prey for this odd mixture of vulture and vampire.

Honoré de Balzac, one of the greatest delineators of character in all literature, wrote a description of George Sand to his adored one in Russia, Madame Hanska. It is dated March 2, 1838, and written from Frapesle.

I arrived at the Chateau of Nohant on the Saturday before Lent [February 4, 1838], about half-past seven o'clock in the evening, and I found Comrade George Sand in her dressing-gown, smoking a cigar, after dinner, by her fireside, in an immense solitary apartment. She had pretty yellow slippers, bordered with fringe, coquettish stockings, and red trousers. So much for her moral aspect. Physically, she has a double chin, like an ecclesiastical dignitary. In spite of her dreadful sorrows, she has not a single white hair in her head; her dark complexion has not altered; her beautiful eyes are just as sparkling; she has just the same stupid look when she is thinking, for, as I said to her, after having studied her, all her physiognomy is in her eye. She has been at Nohant for the last year, very dejected and working prodigiously. She leads very nearly the same sort of life as mine. She goes to bed at six o'clock in the morning and gets up at midday; while I go to bed at six o'clock in the evening and get up at midnight. But naturally

I conformed to her habits, and for the last three days we have chatted after dinner from five o'clock in the evening till five o'clock in the morning, so I have known her better and reciprocally in these three all-night conversations than I did during the four preceding years, when she used to visit me, when she had Jules Sandeau as her lover, and when she formed a connection with Musset. She only met me when I called on her from time to time.

It was rather useful for me to see her, for we exchanged mutual confidences with regard to Jules Sandeau. I, who was the last person to find fault with her for having deserted him, have to-day only the deepest compassion for her, as you will have deep compassion for me when you know the person with whom we had to deal, she in love, and I in friendship.

She has been, however, still more unfortunate with Musset, and now she is living in profound retirement, condemning at the same time marriage and love, because in both she has only met with disappointments.

The whole fact of the matter is – the male that suits her is rare. He must be all the rarer because she is not lovable, and consequently she will find it very hard to win love. She is boyish; she is a true artist; she is grand, generous, devoted, *chaste*; she has the great qualities of a man; *ergo*, she is not womanly; I had no more sensibility with regard to her sex when I was sitting near her than I had formerly, though I was three days talking to her without reserve, merely affected by that skin-deep gallantry which men are accustomed in France and in Poland to display towards every sort of woman. I was chatting with a comrade. She possesses lofty virtues, those virtues which society does not take to kindly. We argued with a seriousness, a sincerity, a candour, a conscientiousness worthy of the great shepherds who lead the flocks of men, about the great subjects of marriage and liberty. . . .

She is an excellent mother, adored by her children, but she brings up her daughter Solange like a little boy, and that is not right. She is *morally* like a young man of twenty, for she is intimately *chaste* and *prudish*, and is only an artist externally. She smokes excessively; she plays the princess perhaps a little too much, and I am sure that in the princess in her novel, '*Le Secrétaire Intime*', she has faithfully painted herself. She knows and says about herself the very things I think about her without my telling it to her, that she has neither strength of

conception nor the faculty for constructing plots, nor the capacity for arriving at a truth, nor the art of the pathetic, but that, without knowing the French language, she has *style*; and such is the fact.

Like me, too, she takes her fame jestingly, and has a profound contempt for the public, whom she calls 'Jumento'. I will give you the details of this woman's immense and secret devotedness towards these two men, and you will then say to yourself that there is nothing in common between the angels and the demons. All the foolish things she has done are titles to fame in the eyes of beautiful and great souls. She has been duped by La Dorval, Bocage, Lamennais, etc., etc.; the same feeling has led to her being deceived by Liszt and Madame d'Agoult, but she has just come to see it with regard to that pair as she did with regard to La Dorval, for she is one of those minds that are powerful in the study, in pure abstraction, and yet easily entrapped in the sphere of realities.

In short, she is a man, and all the more a man because she wants to be one, because she has abandoned the part of woman, and so is no longer a woman. Woman attracts, and she repels, and, as I am very masculine, if she produces this effect on me, she must needs produce it on men who are like me; she will always be unfortunate in this way. Thus, she is now in love with a man who is her inferior [Mallefile], and in such an arrangement there can be nothing but disenchantment and disappointment for a woman of noble nature; a woman should always love a man who is superior to her, or else she should so deceive herself that it is the same as if it were so.

I have not visited Nohant with impunity; I have brought away with me from it an enormous vice; she has made me smoke a hookah and latakia. All of a sudden these things have become a necessity to me. This transition will enable me to give up coffee. . . .

In 1855, a year before his death, writing in bed during his paralytic illness, Heinrich Heine described George Sand in the following flattering words:

She is the greatest French writer, and is a woman of remarkable beauty. Like the genius that is shown in her works, her face can be called beautiful rather than interesting . . . and is of Greek regularity. Her features, however, are not altogether



**GEORGE SAND**

**From the Crayon Portrait by Thomas Couture**

*By permission of the John Day Company, New York*



of classic severity, but are softened by modern sentimentality, which covers them like a veil of sadness. Her forehead is low, and her thick and beautiful chestnut hair falls on each side of her head to her shoulders. Her eyes are somewhat dull, at least they are not brilliant; perhaps their fire is extinguished by frequent tears, or perhaps it has spent itself in her works, which have spread their flames over all the world, and kindled the senses of so many women, and are accused of having caused terrible conflagrations. The author of *Lélia* has gentle and tranquil eyes, which call to mind neither Sodom nor Gomorrah. Her nose is not aquiline and bold, nor is it a witty little flat nose; it is simply straight and ordinary. Round her mouth habitually plays a smile that is full of *bonhomie*, but is not very attractive; her lower lip, slightly drooping, seems to show a fatigue of the senses. Her chin is fleshy, but very well formed. Her shoulders too are beautiful, even magnificent; and so are her arms and hands, which, like her feet, are very small. . . . Her figure on the whole is a little too bulky and too short. The head alone has the stamp of the ideal. . . .

Her voice is flat and muffled, with no sonority, but soft and agreeable. She shines as little by her conversation as by her voice. She has absolutely none of the sparkling wit of most Frenchwomen, but also none of their endless chatter. This moderation in words, however, is caused neither by modesty nor by a deep and sympathetic interest in her interlocutor. She is taciturn rather through pride, because she does not think you worthy of the favour that she should waste her wit upon you, or else it is through egoism, because she is trying to absorb the best of your talk, in order that it may take root in her soul and be used later in her writings.

Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve in his *Portraits contemporains* wrote of George Sand when she was about sixty as follows:

She is feminine, and very feminine, but she has none of the petty meannesses of the sex, neither wiles nor hidden motives: she likes broad and spacious horizons, and these are what she seeks; she concerns herself with the well-being of everybody, with the betterment of the world – which is the noblest sickness of the soul, and the most large-hearted madness.

All these three fine writers are eulogistic. They admire

George Sand as comrade, both as friend and *littérateur*; two of them even speak of her feminine attractiveness. James Huneker in his book *Chopin, the Man and his Music*, quotes a certain Edouard Grenier as having said:

She was short and stout, but her face attracted all my attention, the eyes especially. They were wonderful eyes, a little too close together, it may be, large, with full eyelids, and black, very black, but by no means lustrous; they reminded me of unpolished marble, or rather of velvet, and this gave a strange, dull, even cold expression to her countenance. Her fine eyebrows and these great placid eyes gave her an air of strength and dignity which was not borne out by the lower part of her face. Her nose was rather thick and not over shapely. Her mouth was also rather coarse and her chin small. She spoke with great simplicity, and her manners were very quiet.

Matthew Arnold spoke of her as 'that great soul, simple, affectionate, without vanity, without pedantry, human, equitable, patient, kind' – this was in an article in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1877. Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote two sonnets to George Sand, *A Desire* and *A Recognition*, which are extremely laudatory. Coming from such a womanly woman they would appear most disarming, but she was distinctly a feminist. Even the fastidious Henry James finds much in George Sand's character to admire, though he undoubtedly is more interested in her literary gifts. But the most astounding partisanship of all is that of Sir Henry Hadow in his essay on Chopin in *Studies in Modern Music*. It was published in 1900, and in it he attacks the Chopin biographers who 'cannot easily be acquitted of some recklessness of statement and some unjustifiable licence of language'. Further on: 'Animated with the belief that Chopin was ill-used, impelled by a not unnatural desire to protect him at all hazards, his biographers have accredited George Sand with the incongruous vices of antagonistic temperaments, and have given us a picture, not of a bad woman, but of an impossible monster'. Sir Henry then proceeds to try to convince his readers that a *liaison* did not exist between Chopin and George Sand, that 'it was in reality a pure and cordial friendship, into which there entered no element of shame and no taint of

degradation'. The first part of this statement is impossible to believe in the light of the facts. George Sand herself, in all her whitewashings, did not make a secret of her intimacy with Chopin. She may have spoken of it later on as '*une sorte d'affection maternelle*', but at the beginning she exhibited great pride in claiming Chopin as her lover.

Although there are many other opinions just as flattering to her character it is only right to hear accounts on the debit side. We have seen that lovers were not only necessary to George Sand; they became a habit. Whether she was licentious or not, she was at least indiscriminate, and her choice nearly always fell upon young men, or men who preferred to be mastered. Never, after her experience with Michel de Bourges, would she be a petticoat woman. She had to 'wear the trousers', to make use of a vulgarism, and there were many of them – how many it is impossible to discover, but that is beside the point. Until the sixties she maintained her interest in and affection for men and in 1866 began an affair, though distinctly platonic, with Gustave Flaubert, which lasted until her death in 1876. Undoubtedly she earned and enjoyed the title of much loved woman. But in how many of her lover's hearts did she inspire a lasting affection? Probably only in Musset's. Her own heart was too volatile to suffer any pangs. Humiliation was a word unknown to her. She may have wished for company, for solace, for a momentary adoration, for the satisfaction of her pride, but the majority of her affairs were part of her scheme in life. The weakest side of her literary work was the creative, as Balzac so pointedly told her. This she knew, and in order to describe characters, picture scenes, reflect human emotion she had to have models to imitate. Her lovers were her copy. Without them many of the books of the first period could not have been written. But her love affairs were her own – it is not for us to hold her in contempt for them.

What is much more contemptible is the shameless way in which she writes of some of the discarded lovers, and the endless trouble she took to whitewash herself both by her own writings and by the destruction of every possible contaminating link. We have seen how she retaliated on Alfred de Musset, and we shall see her reaction against Chopin; but these two were by

no means the sole objects of her spleen. She loved scandal, providing it did not affect herself. It did not matter who the victim was – her own mother and father were included, and although we are aware of their indiscretions, she need not have used them as puppets for her voluble and imaginative pen. Loyalty towards supposed friends did not exist for her, more especially in the earlier part of her career. Later on she learned to value among her friends such men as the Abbé Lamennais and Flaubert, but women rarely succeeded in winning this favour.

Her estimation of herself was so prodigious that one is almost forced to admire her for it. Self-satisfaction is the keynote of her *Histoire de ma Vie*, and of all the writings which intimately concern her. She excuses herself for every action, and, as if this were insufficient, even boasts of her experiences. It was impossible for her to label herself a paragon of virtue; this would not fit in with her cult of freedom which is the *raison d'être* of all the first period novels; but she never would admit that any base feelings prompted her to act as she did. Her conscience never pricked, and she could live at peace with the rest of mankind. Never once will she admit having wronged anyone. In the long letter which she wrote to Count Albert Grzymala, Chopin's friend, at the outset of her relationship with Chopin, she writes:

I have believed above all in faithfulness. I have preached it, practised it and exacted it. Others have failed in it, and so have I. And yet I have not felt remorse, because in my infidelities I always submitted to a kind of fatality, an instinct for the ideal, which urged me to leave that which was imperfect for that which appeared to me nearer to perfection.

This extract explains her whole attitude. She could not find any fault in herself. This bred a sense of deception in her own sphere which rapidly enveloped that of others. It is certainly a helpful philosophy, but hardly one to recommend, for we are not all imbued with the superiority complex. As Henry James says:

Madame Sand's plan was to be open to *all* experience, all emotions, all convictions; only to keep the welfare of the human

race, and especially of its humbler members, well in mind, and to trust that one's moral and intellectual life would take a form profitable to the same.

The trait in her character most to be admired was her passionate love of nature. She never tired of living simply or alone, if she could walk and talk with the peasants. Many of her best-portrayed characters are to be found among the workers and farm-hands, or the poor and humble. Nothing stimulated her to finer inspiration than long walks in the fields, or bathing in the brooks, or probing into the secrets of natural history. Her heart was kind, and she was instinctively fond of everything that breathed. Had her upbringing been normal, had she not been a descendant of a long line of love-affairs, had she not found it compulsory to experience life through contact and not through culture, the world would not have classed her outlook and actions as abnormal. But this insane greed for carnal knowledge had to be satiated. She found the period ripe and the victims willing.

As a writer, George Sand presents various problems. Her fame was sudden and unexpected. It came to her without preparation, without schooling, without any knowledge of technique or of the means of self-revelation. She was the fortunate possessor of style, and this one faculty, which almost amounted to genius (for she had served no apprenticeship except that one joint effort with Jules Sandeau), was her saving virtue. Although her tongue was unusually reticent for a woman, and a French woman at that, her pen was never silent. She could write for hours on end, her stamina appearing inexhaustible. Only a very few novelists have exceeded her in quantity of output, though no such assertion could be offered about the quality. In energy, temperament, courage, will-power she was wholly masculine. Nearly all her work was written in the middle of the night, usually from 10 p.m. till 5 or 6 a.m., and it speaks well for her physique and health that she was able to keep up this pitch of laboriousness throughout her long life. She often maintained that nature intended her to be lazy and indolent, that nothing appealed to her as much as tranquillity and idleness. She certainly spent a great deal of her life in meditation

and discernment, but her mustering and mastering of will-power deserves every possible credit. She was not a profound thinker, although she often delved into philosophy. Her first books were eloquent and biting attacks on the problems of marriage. They were deemed immoral, even scandalous, by some, and raised bitter controversies. Perhaps one could say that she was the first authoress courageous enough to express herself freely and comprehensively about the intimacies of happy and unhappy conjugal life, and that she paved the way for the popular sex novels of to-day. She next turned to motives more humanitarian and socialistic, relying more on elegance and poetic charm than on passionate entanglements. After this period she turned to the drama, but though she achieved some success she never gained any tangible foothold in the annals of the French theatre. During the revolutionary years of 1848 and after, she resorted to politics, becoming an ardent Republican and founding a newspaper, *La Cause du Peuple*, in which to express more fervently her own and her party's opinions. Growing tired of political venom and intrigue, and with it the hopeless battle against the varying methods of government, she once again fell back upon romance and free love as the motives for her novels.

She never forgot the principles of Rousseau which had been so ineradicably instilled into her during her childhood. As M. Henri Martin, the great French historian, said of her:

A woman, born a great writer, who will remain among the highest literary glories of France, stirred every soul by her pleadings against the present state of society; at the same time expressing in pictures of deep reality and marvellous poetry, a sentiment of nature which made of her the heiress and, as it were, the daughter of Rousseau.

Henry James calls her an optimist, rejecting the claim 'idealist'.

An optimist 'lined', as the French say, with a romancer, is not the making of a moralist. George Sand's optimism, her idealism, are very beautiful, and the source of that impression of largeness, luminosity and liberality which she makes upon us. But we suspect that something even better in a novelist is that

tender appreciation of actuality which makes even the application of a single coat of rose-colour seem an act of violence.

He vigorously maintains that 'she lacks exactitude – lacks the method of truth'. She romanced too freely. Being endowed with an amazingly facile pen, an unquenchedly fertile brain, but without the gift of painting a true character, she had to revert to weaving fanciful webs around her acquaintances, friends and enemies. This gave her a false estimation of human values and a perverted outlook on mankind. The kindness of her heart, and the undoubted sympathy she often felt for her fellow-beings were not reconcilable with the realization of her ambitions. When she felt that she had drained her victim of all she required of him, he was exchanged for another. It annoyed her to admit that she was a woman, and she determined to adopt the more haphazard and free ways of men. Respect for her lovers, even if it began with passion or admiration, did not last for long. It is for this that posterity has judged her harshly, not because she preferred the life of a libertine. Liszt was as much a libertine, and she could not hurt him. Some time after Chopin's death Liszt and George Sand had lunch together. With the remembrance of her life with Chopin and the tragic end to their intimacy he said to her: 'Well, it is through you that Musset and my Chopin have perished, but, as you see, I have endured, and, thank God, I am living still.' Even with all her self-satisfaction and the innate joy of achieving power and fame, she must have felt very very often that these two geniuses, both as physically weak as they were mentally strong, were stifled and killed by her selfishness, her heartlessness, her masculinity.

## CHAPTER XV

### FATEFUL MEETING

1836-1838

ONE morning during the last month of 1836 Franz Liszt called on Chopin and found him in a state of great elation, having just finished some new compositions. Chopin wished to play them at once to his colleague – maybe he did – but Liszt deemed it an occasion for a party. He therefore proposed to bring some friends to Chopin's rooms in the evening to hear the new creations. Liszt never did anything without a purpose, and this arrangement was the fulfilment of a promise made to George Sand some time before to allow her to meet the much-talked-of composer and pianist. Notwithstanding all the varied accounts, some of them couched in quite fantastic language, and giving varying dates, this private gathering can be accepted as the tragic introduction of Chopin to George Sand.

The following invitation was sent by Chopin to Joseph Brzowski on December 13, 1836:

I am to-day receiving a few people, amongst others Madame Sand; besides this, Liszt will play and Nourrit will sing. If this should be agreeable to Monsieur Brzowski, I shall expect him this evening.

This must have been the famous occasion.

At the end of the fourth volume of the *Histoire de ma Vie* George Sand speaks of the few weeks she spent at the Hotel de France in Paris. 'Madame d'Agoult had persuaded me to live near her, where the conditions of existence were charming. . . . She received many writers, artists and intelligent men of the world. It was with her, or through her, that I became acquainted with Eugène Sue, Baron d'Eckstein, Chopin, Mickiewicz, Nourrit, etc. My friends became hers as well. She on her side met M. Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, Henri Heine, etc. Her salon, improvised in an inn, became a meeting-place for the

élite, over which she presided with an exquisite grace and where she found herself on an equality with all the eminent personalities on account of her wit and the variety of her faculties which were at the same time both poetic and serious. There one heard admirable music, and, in the interval, one could learn much from listening to the talk.'

The Marquis de Custine claims that it was at a *fête* in his home that the two met, and two writers, L. Enault and Karasowski, give glowing, though different, descriptions of the meeting. Both versions read so ridiculously and seem so impossible that they can be dismissed. Chopin would not have sat down and improvised or played his *G minor Ballade* or anything else before such an assemblage, unless he had been paid for it, and of this there is no mention; nor was he by any means so bewitched by his first vision of the beautiful *Lélia* as to 'play only for her'. Chopin's pupil, Adolph Gutmann, told Niecks that he remembered the occasion as a *matinée musicale*, 'that Chopin played a great deal and that Madame Sand devoured him with her eyes'. Auguste Franchomme, the 'cellist, who was supposed to have played at this very *matinée*, had no recollection of it. All he was certain of, according to Niecks, was that they met in 1837, though he did not know where.

Liszt was asked by Niecks at Weimar if the novelist and pianist first met at the Marquis de Custine's house, and he emphatically answered no. 'I ought to know best seeing that I was instrumental in bringing the two together.' Wladimir Karénine, whose four-volume *Life of George Sand* is now recognized as the standard biography, agrees with Liszt on all these details. She speaks of 'poetic inventions and pure fables'. Probably Chopin did play at a *soirée* at the Marquis de Custine's, and probably George Sand was present and did devour him with her eyes; but by then they were well acquainted. After their first meeting in Chopin's rooms, the four often met at the *Hotel de France*, where George Sand occupied a room on the *entresol* and Liszt and his mistress a larger apartment on another floor. It was of one of the *soirées chez Chopin* that Liszt has given such a graphic description in his book. This description is eloquent and grandiose and is poetically made out to be the first meeting. Included in the party were Heine, Meyerbeer, Nourrit (an

artist tenor), Hiller, Delacroix, the two Polish poet-patriots Mickiewicz and Niemcewicz, and George Sand. Chopin was still living at the Chaussée d'Antin, and his apartment 'was only lit up by some wax candles grouped around one of Pleyel's pianos, which he very much liked on account of their slightly veiled but silvery sonority and easy touch'. The illustrious friends stood round the instrument, all excepting George Sand, who, 'buried in a *fauteuil*, her arms resting on a table, sat curiously attentive and gracefully subdued'. They were all oblivious of their secret worries and troubles, their own art and triumphs: they were only conscious of the genius who was giving voice and life 'to the noblest and most exquisite feelings'.

That Madame Sand was interested in the personality of Chopin can be seen in her letters to Liszt and Marie d'Agoult early in 1837. She wished to return the compliment for the Geneva visit, and had invited them on January 18 to come to Nohant as soon as possible. The rooms had been specially prepared and freshly papered, and a portrait of the Countess was hung as a symbol that she was always present in her would-be hostess's thoughts. Liszt wrote on January 22 from Paris saying that Marie had been in bed for nearly a week and could not leave for several days. Eventually they arrived, and the Countess was so happy that she contemplated remaining there throughout the entire spring. Liszt, however, had to leave to fulfil engagements. While he was on his travels George Sand wrote to him on March 28 begging him to come back to them as soon as possible and to bring Chopin with him. 'Tell Chopin that I beg him to accompany you; that Marie cannot live without him and that I adore him.' She also said that she would write to Grzymala to use his persuasion on Chopin as well. In her letters to Marie d'Agoult on the 10th and 21st of April (for the Countess had also returned to Paris), George Sand again earnestly requested her friends to return and bring Chopin with them, adding that nobody had been allowed even to breathe in Marie's room since she left.

But Chopin was not to be entrapped so readily. To a letter to Anton Wodzinski, Chopin added a postscript: 'Perhaps I will go for a few days to George Sand. . . .' That was either in May or June 1837. It is difficult to say definitely that Chopin went

to Nohant during this summer, but it is quite possible that after his return from London in July he sought the rest and the fresh air and the country sun. He was by no means well – this he admitted in that same letter to Anton Wodzinski. ‘Last winter I was ill again with influenza, and was sent to Ems.’ The disappointment of his attachment to Marie Wodzinska and the blow to his pride did not help him to recover his strength.

If George Sand immediately felt a sympathetic bond with Chopin, he was by no means so quickly attracted to her. He was even repelled by her personality. Liszt had given a party to which Hiller and Chopin went together. ‘On the way home,’ so Hiller wrote to Liszt, ‘Chopin said to me “What a repellent woman that Sand is! Is she really a woman? I am very much inclined to doubt it”.’ Moreover he had no wish to become entangled with another woman. The two past experiences had saddened his heart, had shaken his faith in the sincerity and faithfulness of the opposite sex. But both his earlier loves were unsophisticated girls, and he had fondly imagined himself the pursuer. Now he was being confronted with a different problem. A woman, mistress of all the tricks and tactics, strong, vital, determined, intelligent, masterful, was pursuing him. Could he withstand such an onslaught? He could not and he did not. Perhaps he felt the same fascination for her beauty that Musset did; this other unfortunate victim admitted that he could never gaze on such a face without the greatest inward emotion. Chopin’s letters to George Sand, with the exception of a handful of unimportant ones, were destroyed by her, and her letters to him suffered the same fate many years afterwards at her hands, so that we have nothing to guide us as to his conception of her beauty.

The story of the burning of the Sand-Chopin correspondence can now be told with authority. Soon after the composer’s death various versions were given of the finding of these letters by Alexandre Dumas  *fils* , but they were generally discredited. Karénine in her biography of George Sand has published the letters between Dumas  *père*  and  *fils* , and between the latter and George Sand, and these definitely clear up the mystery.

On June 3, 1851, Alexandre Dumas  *fils*  wrote to George Sand from Myslowitz, on the Polish-Silesian frontier, saying

that he would soon be back in Paris, and that, whether Madame Jedrzejewicz liked it or not, he would bring back the letters that George Sand had written to Chopin during their ten years' intimacy. After her brother's death, Louise had found these letters, and was taking them back to Warsaw when the customs police at the frontier, being Russian, refused to allow her to proceed with them. Dumas  *fils*  discovered them at the house of the friend with whom Louise had left them, and obtained them without difficulty, the possessor being too indifferent even to read them. Several months later, on October 7, Madame Sand wrote thanking Dumas most cordially for his trouble and patience, and telling him that she had decided to burn the letters. She asked him to destroy the copy he had made before returning them to her, and to forget what he had read, particularly her references to Solange. During the difficult years of her daughter's development, she felt she could confide only in her 'other self', Chopin, and she did not wish the world to know of her complaints about her intimate life and family troubles, particularly as her daughter had grown out of her unkind and unsympathetic behaviour, and the mother had long ago put it out of her mind.

The preservation of these letters would have helped us to understand more clearly the relationship between the lovers; but I think that George Sand was right to destroy them. She had many unlikeable traits, but she was human, and could not pander to morbid curiosity. It has been forcibly asserted that she was afraid of the revelations: may she not also have been kind to the memory of the dead?

Until the trip to England we can be certain that Marie Wodzinska was the woman of Frédéric's thoughts; but during the latter part of the same year he gradually succumbed to George's purposeful seductions. In spite of her masculinity she could be exceedingly charming. She could not have won so many victories over men by the power of her intellect alone, nor would they have been susceptible to the fluidity of her pen. All through the winter and spring of 1837 and 1838 these two were drawing closer together. Chopin's lack of decision and the frailty of his health made him an easy prey, and in spite of his ideals and his memories he found himself relying more and more

on George Sand's friendship. This suited her *affection maternelle*. She had not yet entirely thrown off the influence of Michel de Bourges, though their personal relations were exceedingly strained; and she wanted to be certain of her choice before entering on another *grande affaire*. Before the *liaison* with Chopin was an accomplished fact (which was probably not earlier than the winter of 1838 when they went together to Majorca) she had at least two more lovers, both of whom were her children's tutors, Eugène Pelletan and Félicien Mallefille. To drown her sorrows she relied on the adoration of others; Chopin could only console himself with his music. Of the creative work resultant from these opposite remedies that of Chopin remains infinitely the greater, above all by its sincerity.

It is perhaps difficult to be fair in our estimation of George Sand. Our sympathies are all for Chopin, not only because he was the weaker of the two, nor because he was more divinely endowed, but because he was the sufferer. He was fastidious to a degree; and, whereas fastidiousness is of compelling importance to any art, and is everywhere noticeable in his creations, it was not so desirable nor so beneficial in his outlook on life. The behaviour of others must often have irked him. Bad manners he detested; loudness and obscenity he abhorred; bad dress, particularly in women, he could not abide. So particular was he over his own appearance that he was often called a dandy. He was ultra-refined and tended towards the exquisite in his taste. His friends, excepting his colleagues, were nearly all of the aristocratic class, and this bred a false estimation of his fellow-creatures and gave him the airs of a snob. He was not what is known as a man of the world; rather was he a man of his own ideals, for he hated improprieties of any kind and professed neither to understand the desire of the people of the period to live illicitly nor to comprehend the meaning of free love.

How, then, is it possible that these two diametrically opposed personalities could be sympathetic – that Chopin could expect to derive happiness from the companionship of such a woman? George Sand hardly possessed any of the same characteristics. Her gypsy-like spirit with its sensual temperament would not allow her to be fastidious about anything, and the promiscuity of her love-affairs is direct proof of this. She pre-

ferred the company of Bohemians to the society of titled people. That she could behave properly is unquestioned, but she found more enjoyment in being careless and carefree. We know of her liking for male attire, her slovenliness and her dislike for any of the finishing touches of the well-dressed woman. Her appearance must have been continually nauseating to Chopin, and equally so her inveterate smoking of cigars and her hookah, for he loathed the smell of tobacco smoke and thought smoking a dirty habit even in men. Again, the simplicity of Chopin's worldly point of view did not coincide with her advanced theories. He may have been over-susceptible to feminine charm, but he always held women in the greatest respect. George Sand admired herself too much to bestow her affection on any man for longer than his usefulness to her lasted. Yet with all these shortcomings we must acknowledge that she was a devoted, if unwise mother, and that she loved and respected her own mother, despite the fact that she used her early waywardness as copy.

Karénine has tried to convince us that George Sand 'possessed a true and profound musical sense', and is indignant with Niecks for saying that Liszt had told him that though she had taste and judgement she was not musical. Liszt probably meant that Madame Sand was not an executant, which would appear to be true. To refute this assertion, Karénine says that

without being a virtuoso, she had a perfect musical ear, an excellent memory, even a certain speed on the piano, which were sufficient for her, even in old age, to play from memory many *airs berrichons, espagnols et majorquins*, as well as dances and excerpts from operas. She also played duets when she was a child, sang agreeably, and was one of the first to appreciate Berlioz.

These attributes are merely the equipment of the average educated woman. But the following quotation from the *Histoire de ma Vie* shows her in a more sinister light:

Chopin has never needed huge materials to give expression to his genius. He needed neither saxophones nor ophicleides to fill the soul with terror; nor church organs nor human voice to fill it with faith and enthusiasm. He has not been recognized,

and still is not, by the crowd. Great progress in taste and in intelligence will be essential before his works become popular. A day will come when his music will be orchestrated without changing anything in his piano scores and when all the world will know that this genius as vast, as complete, as full of knowledge as the greatest masters whose works he has assimilated, has kept an individuality more exquisite than that of Sebastian Bach, more powerful than that of Beethoven, more dramatic than that of Weber. He is all three together, and he is still himself, that is to say, more flowing in style, more austere in greatness, more anguished in sorrow. Mozart alone is his superior, because Mozart had in greater degree the tranquillity of health and consequently the fulness of life.

We admire her for her enthusiasm, but her æsthetic taste is at fault when she predicts the orchestration of Chopin's works. To a musician, such a suggestion is fantastic. The absolute pianistic quality of his music is his greatness.

In the spring of 1838 George Sand made frequent visits to Paris, and, if we can read between the lines of her letter to her friend Madame Marliani, written on May 23, we can surmise that her intimacy with Frédéric was ripening during this period.

My dear, I have delayed replying to you *in full* because you know that the weather is *changeable* in the season of love. In one week, one says many times *yes, no, if, but*, and often one says in the morning: *this is quite intolerable*, only to say in the evening, *in truth this is supreme happiness*. I am waiting then to be able to tell you *definitely* that my barometer registers something if not stable at least set fair for a certain period.

Later on in the same summer she wrote a lengthy letter of about five thousand words to Chopin's friend, Albert Grzymala, in which she exposed her soul in a most uncompromising way. For once she did not whitewash herself, did not shelter behind any moral scruples, threw herself without mercy on the critics who had labelled her 'hypocrite'. It is impossible to quote the whole of this remarkable psychological outburst, nor is it necessary. Portions of it will be given to enable readers to get a glimpse of this extraordinary woman's reactions to love. The whole letter is full of contradictions, and is verbose to a degree.

It does not read like a sincere effort, though no doubt the writer imagined she was expressing her true self.

. . . Listen to me well, and reply clearly, categorically, point-blank. This person [Marie Wodzinska] whom he wishes, or ought, or thinks he ought to love, is she fitted to make him happy, or would she add to his suffering and his sadness? I do not ask if he loves her, if she loves him, if he thinks more of her than of me, or less. I know, approximately, by what is happening to me, what he must be feeling. I wish to know which of *us two* he must forget or abandon for his peace of mind, his happiness, for his life, in short, which seems to me too unsettled and frail to withstand great sorrows. I do not want to play the part of a bad angel. . . . If I had known that there was a bond in the life of our child, a sentiment in his soul, I should never have leaned down to breathe a perfume destined for a different altar. He, also, would doubtless have drawn back from my first kiss had he known that I was as good as married. We did not deceive ourselves, we abandoned ourselves to the passing wind which for a few moments carried us into another region. . . . For myself, I do not want to give myself up to passion, although in the depths of my heart there is still at times a menacing source of fire. . . . Then there is an excellent being [Mallefille], *perfect* both as regards heart and honour, whom I shall never leave, because he is the only man who, having been with me nearly a year, has not once, for *one single moment*, caused me to suffer. He is also the only man who has given himself wholly and absolutely to me without regret for the past or thought for the future. Also, he is so good and so sensible that in time I could teach him to understand everything, to know everything; he is a malleable wax upon which I have set my seal, and when I wish to change the imprint, I shall be able to do so with precaution and patience. But to-day it is not possible, and his happiness is sacred to me.

So much for me; bound as I am, chained perhaps for years, I could not wish that our *little one* should on his side break the chains that bind him. If he should give his life into my hands, I should be alarmed, because, having accepted another, I could not take the place for him of that which he had given up for me. . . . It is in heaven that we should meet, and the flying moments that we shall spend there will be so beautiful that they will be worth a lifetime lived below.

My duty, then, is laid down. But I can, without forswearing it, accomplish it in two different ways; either by keeping away from C. as much as possible, trying not to occupy his thoughts, never allowing myself to be alone with him, or, on the other hand, by drawing as near to him as possible without compromising the security of M., reminding him of my existence gently during his hours of rest and blessedness, pressing him sometimes chastely in my arms, when the wind of heaven raises us and transports us to the skies. . . . You shall tell me if I am wrong; I believe the person [Marie Wodzinska] to be charming, worthy of all love and of all respect, because a being such as he can only love the pure and the beautiful. But I think that you dread marriage for him, the bonds of the daily round, real life, business, domestic cares – everything, in a word, that seems foreign to his nature and contrary to the inspiration of his muse. I should fear it for him too; but on this point I can give no opinion because there are many aspects under which he is completely unknown to me. I have only seen that side of him that is turned to the sun. You, then, shall determine my views on this point. . . . What I should fear most in the world, what would give me the greatest pain, what would even make me decide to become *dead to him*, would be to see myself becoming a terror and a remorse in his *soul*; no, I cannot (unless she should be deadly for him, quite apart from me) fight against the image and the memory of another. I respect property too much for that, or rather, it is the sole property that I respect. I will steal no one from anyone, except captives from gaolers, victims from the hangman, and consequently Poland from Russia. . . .

I have always condemned the woman when she wished to be happy at the price of the man's happiness; I have always absolved the man when more was demanded from him than is consistent with liberty and human dignity. A vow of love and faithfulness is a crime or a cowardice, when the mouth speaks what the heart disavows, and one can ask everything of a man except a cowardice and a crime. . . . If his heart can, like mine, hold two quite different loves, one which is so to speak the *body* of life, the other the *soul*, that would be the best. . . .

Perhaps we should also consider telling him my position as regards M[allefile]. It is to be feared that, not being aware of it, he might think he had a kind of duty towards me that would embarrass him. . . . I have always relied largely on my instincts, which have always been noble; I have been mistaken

sometimes about other people, but never about myself. I have known many kinds of love—love of the artist, love of the woman, love of the sister, love of the mother, love of the nun, love of the poet. Some have been born and have died within me the same day, without ever being revealed to their object. Some have martyred my life and have driven me to despair, almost to madness. Some have held me cloistered for years in an excessive spirituality. All this has been perfectly sincere. . . .

Until now, I have been faithful to what I have loved, perfectly faithful, in the sense that I have deceived nobody and that I have never been unfaithful without very strong reasons, which killed love in me through the fault of others. I am not by nature inconstant. I am on the contrary so used to loving exclusively whoever loves me well, I am so difficult to rouse, so used to living among men without thinking that I am a woman, that truly I have been a little abashed and astonished at the effect produced upon me by this little creature. . . .

. . . No love without fidelity, I have just said; and certainly alas! I did not feel the same tenderness for poor M. when I saw him again. . . . One can be more unfaithful, or less; but once one has allowed the invasion of one's soul and has granted the simplest caress with a feeling of love, then infidelity is already consummated, and the rest is less important; because whoever has lost the heart has lost all. . . .

And since I am telling you everything, I want to tell you that one thing only in him displeased me; namely, he had false reasons for abstaining. Until then, I found it beautiful that he should abstain out of respect for me, out of timidity, or even out of faithfulness for someone else. . . . But at your house, just as he was leaving, and as if he wished to resist a last temptation, he said a few words that did not fit in with my ideas. He seemed, like the pious, to despise *human* coarseness, and to blush at the temptations he had had, and to fear to sully our love by any further transport. This view of the last embrace of love has always repelled me. If the last embrace is not as holy, as pure, as consecrated as the rest, there is no virtue in abstention. . . . He said, I think, that *certain acts* could mar a memory. Tell me, that was stupid, and he did not mean it? Who then is the unfortunate woman who has left him with such an impression of physical love? Has he had an unworthy mistress? Poor angel! One should hang all the women who debase in the eyes of men the thing that in all creation is the holiest and the most worthy

of respect, the divine mystery, the most essential act in life and the sublimest in the life of the universe. . . .

. . . I want you at Nohant this summer, as soon and for as long as possible. . . . As for the *little one*, he shall come if he wishes to; but in that case I must be warned in advance, because I will send M. either to Paris or to Geneva. There will be no lack of pretexts, and he will never suspect anything. . . . Now you know all there is to know about me. This is a letter such as I do not write twice in ten years. I am so lazy, and I so detest talking about myself.

This letter, with its sublime exhibition of self-hypnotism, must be read to be believed.

During 1838 the relations between Marie d'Agoult and George Sand became strained. From supposed great affection the tone of their letters dwindled to icy coldness, and the following year the rupture point was reached. They never met again. Liszt occasionally saw George Sand, but they met only as old comrades. Marie d'Agoult was a vain creature. She could not bear to know of any other woman being preferred to her by any of her male friends. The knowledge that Chopin and George Sand were intimate displeased her, and when she heard that they had left for Majorca together her estimation of her one-time friend went down to zero. In November 1839 she described Chopin as an 'oyster powdered with sugar' (*huître saupoudrée de sucre*). The Countess had already been troublesome over the friendship between Liszt and George Sand. Whether she had reason or not it is difficult to prove, especially with two such inconstant lovers; but already her attitude was alienating her from her adored Franz. When the two women parted in July 1838, they promised to write as in the past. They wrote, but most restrainedly. George was annoyed by the pin-pricks of Marie concerning the presence of Mallefille and Chopin at Nohant. She was equally annoyed over the ill-assorted companionship of Marie and Liszt, deeming Marie too insignificant to be the mate of a great artist. When Balzac visited her at Nohant George Sand expressed these views to him very forcibly and begged him to use the material to write two stories, even providing him with the titles for them. She could not, in her position, write them herself. Balzac did write about

them, but in a book, *Béatrix*, one of the *Comédie Humaine*, which he finished that same year. Liszt is *Conti*, the critic Gustave Planche is *Claude Vignon*, *Béatrix* is Marie d'Agoult, and *Félicité des Touches*, George Sand. The character of *Béatrix* is rather cruelly portrayed.

For Chopin, the three years that elapsed after the publication of the *Boléro*, Op. 19, were not particularly productive. He was not idle – that he never was – but he was in a stage of evolution, emerging from the gifted young man to the developed and consummate artist. The *First Scherzo*, Op. 20, appeared in March 1835, and this, with No. 1 and No. 3 of the *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 67, the *Waltz in F minor*, Op. 69, No. 1, the *Waltz in G flat*, Op. 70, No. 1, and probably the final revision of some of the *Twelve Études*, Op. 25, completed the compositions of that year. In 1836 he wrote the *Two Polonaises*, *C sharp minor and E flat minor*, Op. 26, and the *Two Nocturnes*, *C sharp minor and D flat major*, Op. 27, published in July and May respectively, and in 1837, the *Impromptu in A flat*, Op. 29, the *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 30, the *Second Scherzo*, in *B flat minor*, Op. 31, and the *Two Nocturnes*, *B major and A flat major*, Op. 32. Opp. 29, 30 and 31 were published in 1838, Op. 32 in 1837. The *Études*, Op. 25, were in embryo from 1830 onwards, but evidently Chopin was not satisfied with them for some years, for they did not appear until October 1837. As we can see, the works are growing in importance. From now onwards they become more polished, more the efforts of a fully equipped musician, and of one whose attitude towards life was expanding. Subsequent happenings were to mature him still more.

Chopin does not appear to have taken part in any activities during the last months of 1837, but in the following February he was commanded to play at the French Court (not at the English Court, as one recent biographer has said), where his improvisations were greatly admired. On March 3 he played at a concert given by Alkan in Paris, Zimmermann and Gutmann joining in a performance for two pianofortes and eight hands of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, arranged by Alkan.

Alkan was an extraordinary man. His real name was Charles Henri Valentin Morhange. Born in 1813, he quickly became known as a pianist, and came to London in that

capacity in 1833. He then returned to Paris, where he lived and taught until 1888. He composed a great number of works for the pianoforte, some of which, although of little musical value, can be counted as the most technically difficult for the instrument. My own master, the late Frits Hartvigson, knew him, and told me that Liszt once said to him that Alkan had the finest technique of anyone he knew, but that he preferred the life of a recluse to that of the concert platform.

Later on in March, Chopin went to Rouen to play at a concert organized by his compatriot Orłowski in aid of Polish refugees. He played his *E minor Concerto*, and judging by the Press seems to have created a *furor*. Legouvé, the friend of Liszt and a critic on the *Gazette musicale*, was particularly complimentary. At the end of the criticism is the following: 'When it shall be asked who is the first pianist in Europe, Liszt or Thalberg, let all the world reply like those who have heard you – Chopin'.

Chopin had lost interest in his playing, though he must have been gratified to read such praise. Publicity had lost its glamour – he only wanted to compose, and to have health and happiness. At the end of the autumn he clutched at both with all his hope. He was to see and feel the sun – would it be sufficient?

## CHAPTER XVI

### MAJORCAN EPISODE

1838-1839

CHOPIN was not the only person who was ill during the spring and summer of 1838. Maurice Sand, then in his sixteenth year, had been suffering from acute rheumatism. His mother hoped to prevent a return of the attack during the coming winter by taking him to the Mediterranean. For herself she looked forward to a period of tranquillity in which she could accomplish some work and devote more time to her children's education. This she tells us in her *Histoire de ma Vie*. Her mind was as disturbed as Chopin's. After Michel de Bourges she sought consolation with Mallefille, who made no demands upon her. But her interest was becoming focused on Chopin, and to avoid complexities and the babble of a fresh scandal the choice of a quiet rendezvous far away was essential. Chopin was just as eager to get away from his associations and bitter memories, and, having been peremptorily ordered by his doctor to go south, no doubt welcomed the opportunity of travelling with the Sand *ménage*. Whether or not George Sand was the instigator of the plot makes no difference. We are willing to accept her version, though, maybe, we are told only half the truth.

According to her written statements Chopin, whom she saw every day, had often said to her that if he were in Maurice's place he would quickly recover. A doctor had assured her that Chopin was not consumptive, and had told her 'you will save him, in fact, if you give him air, some walking and rest'. She then makes out that his friends in Paris insisted on his being in the charge of a person whom he loved and who would be devoted to him, and begged her not to oppose his wishes.

Once again we see George Sand loth to take the blame for any of her actions, and excusing herself for attempting such a hopeless venture with a sick man, two children (one ill) and no physician. She says that Chopin's health had greatly improved, and had reassured all his friends, with the exception of Grzy-

mala, about his ultimate recovery. She had begged Chopin to be absolutely certain of his desire to go, for hitherto he had abhorred the idea of leaving his doctor, his friends, his apartment and his piano. 'He was a man of imperious habits, and every change, no matter how small, was a terrible event in his life.'

They had decided to meet at Perpignan, close to the Spanish border – either because they were afraid of flaunting convention, or out of respect for the children. If Chopin failed to turn up at the appointed time the family would journey on into Spain alone. Madame Sand took the credit for choosing Majorca as their retreat, being advised by friends that its climate would be most beneficial. Soon she was to find that their advice was wrong – they had never been there. Another inducement was that the thought of a new country and people roused her curiosity; she was always on the look-out for new material for her books. Italy had been her first choice, but the addition of Chopin to the party made a less frequented place desirable. She and her family, with a servant, left Paris on October 18, spending some days at Lyons, Avignon and Arles, and finally reaching Perpignan about October 29 or 30.

Chopin, on the other hand, was not so outspoken, nor had he arranged any itinerary. Except Fontana, Grzymala and Matuszynski, no one knew of his projected trip. With his hatred of publicity in any form and his correctness of attitude towards moral behaviour, he had no wish to tell anyone of this new *affaire de cœur*. Karénine, who blindly shelters the heroine of her biography whenever possible, admits that the intimacy dated from the spring of 1838. George Sand had to visit Paris frequently to wind up the domestic affairs of herself and M. Dudevant, and her reunions with Chopin developed so quickly as to necessitate her making her abode there once again. It was during this summer that Chopin first went to Nohant. Another interesting affirmation of Karénine is that Chopin and Liszt never visited Nohant at the same time. The stories about their playing the pianoforte together and in imitation on the terrace, after the instrument had with difficulty been dragged there, are pure fabrications. Liszt never visited Nohant after the spring of 1837, and Pauline Viardot never saw the place before

1841, although she is mentioned as the third great artist who was there with them.

The one stumbling-block in Chopin's way about the Balearic trip was finance. His continued bad health had prevented him from saving any money, and this dilemma almost caused the abandonment of the project. Niecks was told by Gutmann that Camille Pleyel paid 2,000 francs for the copyright of the *Preludes*, Op. 28. We know that Chopin received 500 francs in advance for them, that on March 2 or 7, 1839, he wrote to Fontana saying that he had sent the manuscripts and hoped that Fontana would receive the extra fifteen hundred, one thousand of which he was to pay to August Leo, a banker. Chopin had borrowed 1,000 francs from this Jew relative of Moscheles, obviously to finance his travelling. The transaction with Pleyel was made and carried out, but, for some inexplicable reason, the pianoforte manufacturer appears to have been pessimistic about the completion of the works, though he and Chopin had been friends for many years and Chopin had always played Pleyel pianos.

'Chopin arrived at Perpignan yesterday,' writes George Sand to Madame Marliani, 'fresh as a rose, and rosy as a turnip; looking well besides, having borne his four nights in the mail coach heroically.' They travelled by local steamer from Portvendres to Barcelona where, after a few days' sightseeing, they embarked in the steamer *El Mallorquin* for Palma, the capital of Majorca. Chopin did not suffer too much on either voyage, for the weather was fine and the sea smooth. George Sand in *Un Hiver à Majorque* finds the temperature there on arrival the equal of that of June in France. 'But the difficulty of establishing ourselves', she goes on, 'was soon to preoccupy us, and we realized that the Spaniards who had recommended Majorca to us as a most hospitable country, full of resources, had deluded themselves, as well as us. In a land so near to the great civilizations of Europe we scarcely expected not to find a single inn. This absence of *pied-à-terre* for travellers should have taught us how Majorca compared with the rest of the world, and should have caused us to return immediately to Barcelona.'

This was their first disillusionment. After the almost magical

crossing, which her two invalids had survived so wonderfully, the failure was a bitter disappointment to her. She was in ecstasy over the climate, the landscape, the vegetation, the Arab architecture – but these could not make up for the lack of hotels or even furnished rooms in this, the largest town in all the islands. For the first eight days the party had to exist in two rooms, scarcely furnished, in a boarding-house in the Calle de la Marina, where the food was almost uneatable. After several days of anxious searching George Sand ‘found a house in the country, owned by a certain Señor Gomez who let to the travellers his dwelling with everything in it for the modest sum of fifty francs a month’. But this, although well situated, was also inadequately furnished, and Madame Sand was forced to buy the most elementary goods and chattels. Two leagues away (about six miles) was a cell of three rooms, part of the old monastery of Valldemosa, which she could rent for thirty-five francs a year.

Chopin appeared happy, judging from a letter to Fontana, written on November 19. Julian Fontana was one of his life-long friends. They were of the same age, and had studied together under Elsner. After the revolution Fontana emigrated to Paris and London, where he gave lessons and tried to make a career as a pianist. In 1841 he went to Havana, where he married a rich creole, and afterwards to New York. After the death of his wife he lost all his fortune and returned to Paris, living there in complete misery. He committed suicide in 1870. Most of the posthumous works of Chopin were published by him.

MY DEAR, –

I am in Palma among palms, cedars, cacti, olives, pomegranates, etc. Everything the *Jardin des Plantes* has in its green-houses. A sky like turquoise, a sea like lapis lazuli, mountains like emerald, air like heaven. Sun all day, and hot; everyone in summer clothing; at night guitars and singing for hours. Huge balconies with grape-vines overhead; Moorish walls. Everything looks towards Africa, as the town does. In short, a glorious life! Love me. Go to Pleyel; the piano has not yet come. How was it sent? You will soon receive some Preludes.

I shall probably lodge in a wonderful monastery, the most beautiful situation in the world; sea, mountains, palms, a

cemetery, a crusaders' church, ruined mosques, aged trees, thousand-year-old-olives. Ah, my dear, I am coming alive a little – I am near to what is most beautiful. I am better. – Give my parents' letters and anything you have to send me to Grzymala; he knows the safest address. Embrace Jasio. How well he would recover here! [John Matuszynski, who had the same complaint.]

Tell Pleyel that he will soon get a manuscript. Don't talk much about me to the people I know. I will write you many things later. Say that I am returning after the winter. The post leaves here once a week. I write through the Consulate here. Send my letter to my parents, just as it is. Post it yourself.

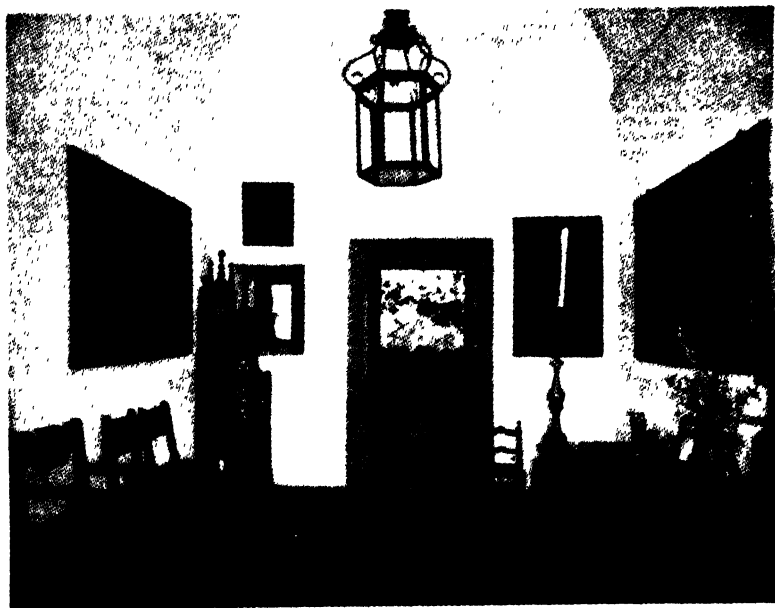
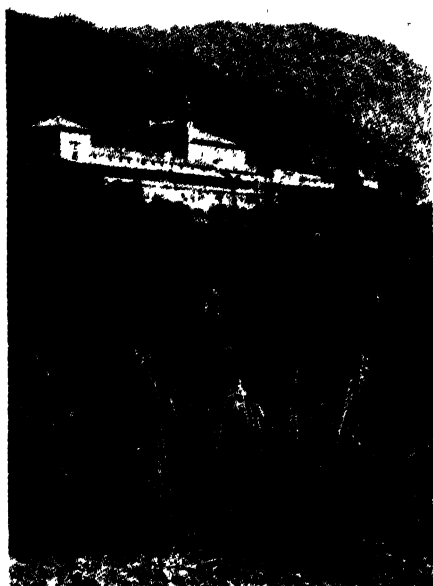
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CH.

If only this state of exaltation could have lasted! Chopin's health would have improved and years would have been added to his life. But fate had decreed otherwise. One has to note how anxious he is about either his friends or his parents knowing anything of his movements. He could not bear to shock his family, nor could he afford to let his friends think that he had fallen from his ideals.

Everything went well for two or three weeks at *Son Vent*, their villa. George Sand was just as enamoured of the place as Chopin. 'It is poetry, it is solitude, it is everything that is most artistic, *de plus chiqué sous le ciel*; and what a sky! What a country! We are enchanted.' Then came the rain. The enchantment was over. The jerry-built house could not stand up to the descending torrents. The walls swelled with the damp, which, despite an outside temperature of 65° Fahrenheit, chilled all the inhabitants. The house, being devoid of chimneys, had to be warmed by braziers, which made the atmosphere almost unbearable. The bad air caused Chopin to choke and cough and brought on an acute attack of bronchitis. The people of the Islands had always had a horror of any pulmonary complaint, and when they heard that Chopin was breathing with difficulty they were convinced that it was phthisis, which they dreaded like the plague. He was seen by the best doctors available, but none of them took sufficient interest to alleviate his pain.

One morning a letter arrived from Señor Gomez demand-



CHARTREUSE DE VALLEDEMOSA AND VIEW OF CHOPIN'S CELL

*By courtesy of Don Bartomeu Ferrà*



ing their instant removal, on the grounds that the illness was contagious and threatened the health of his family. It was not that the visitors minded leaving the house – if the rain did not stop soon they would be drowned – but they did not know how to move the invalid. He was by now dangerously ill and there was no suitable means of transport. And where could they go? The cell, six miles away, would be excellent to work in, but could not house five people. Luckily the French Consul came to the rescue and gave them hospitality for some days. Fortune was again with the unhappy party. They heard of a Spanish refugee who had been living with his wife in a more roomy cell at the Carthusian Monastery of Valldemosa. How long he had hidden there no one seemed to know, but he suddenly desired to leave, and offered his cell and the furniture to Madame Sand for 1,000 francs. Naturally the offer was accepted, although Madame complains that she could have bought it all for 300 francs in France. The furnishings comprised some trestle beds with hard mattresses, a couple of white wood tables, some straw-seated chairs, a shabby sofa and a smoking stove. The paved floor had an esparto-grass mat and some dirty sheep-skins. On the walls were some engravings, and in the one large room was an oak bench in Gothic style which belonged to the sacristan; it was of immense proportions and gave a sense of monastic grandeur to the room. Here they arrived on December 15, six weeks after landing on the island.

Chopin wrote to Fontana on December 3, telling him of his illness.

I can't send you the manuscript, for it's not finished. I have been as sick as a dog these last two weeks. I caught cold in spite of 18 degrees of heat [Centigrade], roses, oranges, palms, figs, and three most famous doctors of the island. One sniffed at what I spat up, the second tapped where I spat it from, the third poked about and listened how I spat it. One said I had died, the second that I am dying, the third that I shall die. And to-day I'm the same as ever; only I can't forgive Jasio for not giving me a consultation when I had an attack of *bronchite aigue*, which can always be expected in my case. I could scarcely keep them from bleeding me. . . .

But all this has affected the Preludes and God knows when

reçu

19. Mars 1839

Palma 2.1 g<sup>de</sup> 1838

Cher Pierre, Je suis arrivé à  
Palma pay. délicieux -  
printemps perpétuel - Oliviers, orangers  
Palmiers, citronniers etc. etc.  
Ma santé se trouve mieux -  
et la votre ? - J'ai eu le plaisir  
de partir sans savoir positivement  
comment je vous laïssai -  
Me me laïsser par long-temps  
si loin de vous sans savoir si  
vous êtes tout à fait rétabli. -  
J'ai aussi écrit quelque chose  
sur les vôtres.

Adieu. Cherissée, mes  
respects à votre maman et mes  
belle chose à M<sup>lle</sup>. L. de Duroy  
P. V. S.

Adresser vos lettres: ~~à~~  
à M<sup>r</sup> le chargé d'Affaires  
étrangères à Marseille pour  
faire passer à M<sup>r</sup> le Consul  
de France à Barcelone (et  
sous enveloppe) à M<sup>r</sup> Chopin à Palma  
de Mallorca . -

Mon piano n'est pas  
encore arrivé - Comment  
l'avoir vous envoie-t- par Marseille  
ou par Perpignan.

Je rêve m. si - mais je  
n'en ~~peut~~ <sup>peut</sup> faire pas - parceque  
ici on n'a pas de pianos...  
c'est un pays seravage sous ce rapport.

you will get them. I shall stay for a few days in the loveliest district in the world; sea, mountains, everything you want. I shall lodge in a huge, old, ruined monastery of Carthusians whom Mendizabal has expelled, as if specially for me. It is near Palma, could not be lovelier; porches, the most poetic of cemeteries; in a word I shall be happy there. Only I still have no piano. I wrote to Pleyel. Find out. Say that I was very unwell at first but am all right again. Anyhow don't say much about me or about the manuscripts. . . . Tell Leo that I have not yet sent the Prelude to Albrecht, that I love them very much and will write to them. . . . Don't tell people that I've been ill; or they'll make up a tale.

Mendizabal was a Spanish statesman and friend of George Sand, and had accompanied Chopin from Paris to Perpignan. Albrecht, to whom Chopin dedicated the *B minor Scherzo*, was an attaché at the Saxon Legation and afterwards a wine merchant. It is difficult to find out which Prelude was to be sent to him; we know from a letter to Fontana that Chopin had finished the *A flat Prelude* in 1837.

The same day, December 3, Chopin wrote a short note to Grzymala in which he complains that

this is a diabolical country, so far as post, people and comfort are concerned. The sky is as beautiful as your soul; the earth as black as my heart.

The cause of his sudden and violent bronchial attack was a long walk which Chopin had undertaken with the others to a hermitage about three miles distant. Naturally his pace was slow, and was not helped by the appalling condition of the roads or tracks. He had made similar excursions, though none so ambitious, hoping to recover his strength, but this one proved to be his last. The rough stones cut his feet; and on the return journey a violent wind and rain storm enveloped the walkers. They were repeatedly blown down, and the rain soaked them through. Chopin arrived back completely exhausted. His illness became alarmingly acute and there is no doubt that the progress of the disease that killed him was accelerated by this disastrous walk. We know that he had

never been robust, that he had had fits of coughing, that he was prone to persistent attacks of influenza, but he had hitherto always been able to throw them off with careful nursing and attention. From now onwards the pulmonary disease never loosened its grip.

On December 14 another letter was written to Fontana. Chopin is upset that no letters have arrived either from Fontana or from his parents, but he blames the post, 'the most irregular one on earth'.

I heard only to-day that the piano was put on to a trading-vessel in Marseilles on December 1. The letter has taken 14 days from Marseilles. So I can hope that the piano will spend the winter in the dock, or at anchor (for here nothing moves but the rain), and that I shall receive it when I am starting back; which will be a great consolation, as, besides 500 francs' duty, I shall have the pleasure of dispatching it back again. Meanwhile my manuscripts sleep, and I can't sleep; only cough and, covered with poultices for a long time past, wait for the spring or for something else. — To-morrow I go to that wonderful monastery of Valldemosa, to write in the cell of some old monk, who perhaps had more fire in his soul than I, and stifled it, stifled and extinguished it, because he had it in vain. I think I shall soon send you my Preludes and a Ballade. Go to Leo. Don't say that I'm ill; they'd get a thousandfold scare. And to Pleyel.

From these letters we see that Chopin was both ill and unhappy. They are not only despondent like so many of his previous utterances, but they have a ring of despair. Although he appears to have done some work (for a very poor specimen of a piano, of Majorcan make, was already in the cell) he had not accomplished enough to satisfy his enthusiasm, nor had he been able to keep up with his inspirations. The *Ballade* referred to is the *F major*, Op. 38. He still did not wish his two financial helpers to know anything about his illness, not wanting them to feel that their money was unsafe. Although Chopin became very hard and severe over his transactions with publishers, and appears to have been just as mercenary as the Jews he accused, he was absolutely honest in all his private affairs.

When the *ménage* moved up to the monastery they found themselves no happier. Food was almost impossible to procure. At first the cook of the French Consul in Palma sent up their provisions, but after the bad weather set in this was impossible, and they had to rely on the peasants to supply them with the ordinary necessities of life. The only meat obtainable was pork, which Chopin could not digest, and the only poultry was almost too old to eat. Fish was bad, butter non-existent – even the bread arrived sodden with rain. As time went on the peasants became more and more suspicious, and as soon as the news spread that the visitors did not go to Sunday mass they were treated as heretics. Nobody would have anything to do with them, and they were forced to pay three or four times the ordinary price for everything. If Madame Sand dared to complain at the exorbitant prices, the goods were replaced in the basket with true Spanish haughtiness.

The superstitions of the peasants, and their fear of contagion, prevented any possibility of happiness or the nursing back to health of the miserable invalid. The local cooks were disgustingly dirty, besides being thieves, and put so much pepper and garlic into every dish that even good digestions could not stomach them. George Sand is never lax in her reiterations that she and her children could have borne it all and enjoyed the life, but that Chopin was a hopeless patient. He could have existed quite well on a *consommé* and a glass of Burgundy, she maintains, but even this simple fare was unprocurable. As early as December 14, the day before leaving *Son Vent*, she writes to Madame Marliani that the exploit is a fiasco. Proper nourishment is impossible if one's digestion will not stand 'rancid oil and pig's grease'.

Chopin describes his new abode to Fontana on December 28 as follows:

It's a huge Carthusian monastery, stuck down between rocks and sea, where you may imagine me, without white gloves or hair-curling, as pale as ever, in a cell with such doors as Paris never had for gates. The cell is the shape of a tall coffin, with an enormous dusty vaulting, a small window, outside the window orange-trees, palms and cypresses, opposite the window my bed on rollers under a Moorish filigree rosette. Beside the

bed is a square table for writing, which I can scarcely use, and on it (a great luxury here) a leaden candlestick with a candle. Bach, my scrawls and (not my) waste paper – silence – you could scream – there would still be silence. Indeed, I write to you from a strange place. . . .

Later on he tells of the conditions:

Nature is a beautiful thing, but it's better to have no dealings with human beings. No roads, no post. I have come here many times from Palma, always with the same driver, always by a new way. The torrents make the roads, the avalanches keep them in repair; to-day you can't pass here because it's been ploughed, to-morrow only mules can manage; and what vehicles! . . . Therefore there is not a single Englishman, not even a consul.

At the end of this long letter, the middle of which is taken up with financial matters, he continues his observations.

Nature is benevolent here, but the people are thieves, because they never see strangers, and so don't know how much to demand. Oranges can be had for nothing, but a trouser button costs a fabulous sum. But all that is just a grain of sand, when one has this sky, this poetry that everything breathes here, this colouring of the most exquisite places, colour not yet faded by men's eyes. No one has yet scared away the eagles that soar every day above our heads! For Heaven's sake, write, and always stamp your letters.

Before the party left *Son Vent* Señor Gomez further showed his colours by demanding the complete repainting and replastering of the inside and the whitewashing of the outside of his house, as well as the burning of all the linen and hangings. He was taking no risks. Besides this unforeseen expense, the various moves, the purchase of the cell and its contents and the fabulous prices paid for the ordinary amenities of life were making huge demands on George Sand's resources. She was compelled to write to the Editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Buloz, and borrow on subsequent articles. No doubt this had its reaction on Chopin. He felt that he had to finish the *Preludes*, and so be able to offer new compositions for sale. His weakness virtually

kept him a prisoner and the only escape from his melancholy was in his work. He became a prey to his nerves, which were never really under control, and undoubtedly he was a most trying patient. All this period must have been a nightmare to George, yet she endured it manfully, and not only nursed him with zeal and courage but managed to accomplish quite a lot of work herself. She was indeed an extraordinary woman. When his attack of bronchitis was succeeded by choking fits and severe laryngitis, and the doctor suggested bleeding as the only relief, George Sand would have none of it. She was just as convinced as the patient that the loss of blood to any extent would kill him. Two things were of vital necessity for the return of his strength – wholesome food and sunshine. One day, when a chicken was served (always a very risky affair, for they were terribly lean and as dry as parchment), fleas were found jumping on its back. The children were highly amused, but not so the patient or the nurse. The latter was at her wits' end to know what to order. We can only surmise what the pathetic Chopin suffered during these weeks. He longed to leave the island and get back to civilization once again, but there seemed little hope of his ever being well enough to withstand the journey: at the moment it was out of the question.

The monastery itself dated from the fifteenth century. It was enormous in extent, and built entirely of stone, the only external relief being the Gothic windows; there was no other architectural beauty. The population of a township could have been housed within its walls, for, besides the quarters of the Superior and the various cells of the monks and the novices, there were lodgings for visitors, three cloisters of twelve cells each and twelve chapels. In the centre of this huge pile was the cemetery. All the cells were locked up, with their furniture stored within, and nothing would induce the sacristan to open the doors.

It was in one of the twelve cells of the newest of the three cloisters that this strange *ménage* was housed. The quarters were large, well ventilated and fairly well lighted, and were separated from the cloister by a dark corridor, the wall of which was three feet thick. They had three rooms, one large and two small, one of the latter having an alcove. The kitchen consisted of two

small stoves which were outside in a kind of vault that protected the *chef* from the rain. There were three inhabitants of the monastery when they arrived, an apothecary, a sacristan and a wretched woman named Maria Antonia, who kept house and insisted on being a domestic. She was a miserable being – a thief, a drudge, and a nuisance. It is difficult to know which George Sand hated more, Señor Gomez or this servant.

There was a flower garden about as large as the cell within walls ten feet high. As each cell had its own piece of ground the effect was that of one vast garden. Pomegranates, lemons and oranges grew in abundance, whilst vines and almonds and palms grew in the terraces that separated the different plots. The furnishings of the rooms were adequate, or at least were made so by feminine adroitness. A French lady who was living on the island 'had had the goodness to give us several pounds of feathers which had come to her from Marseilles and which we had made into two pillows for our invalid'. The mattresses were exceptionally clean, if not very soft, and chintz covers brightened up the general effect of the room, everything possible being thought out for comfort. Whatever harsh things we may previously have imagined against George Sand, we must grant her credit for her thoughtfulness now. She was excellent in a crisis. Apart from the food question and, of course, Chopin's coughing, the picnic might have been successful, but no one who has read *Un Hiver à Majorque* can visualize anything but failure and disappointment.

In his letter to Fontana of December 28 Chopin says that 'the piano has been waiting eight days in the port, according to the *douane*, which wants a mountain of gold pieces for the piggish thing'. George Sand wrote to Madame Marliani on January 22 that the only remarkable event since the last letter is the arrival of the longed-for piano. Apparently it arrived without any accident, and the inhabitants of the Chartreuse were soon rejoicing at the lovely sounds and melodies which Chopin produced from it. Even the people of the country became interested. They would arrive under any pretext, clamber over the walls, peep through the crevices, excuse their advent because they wanted their animals and live-stock blessed – all to catch a glimpse of this feeble outcast and hear his lovely music. The

instrument was only a small upright Pleyel, but the duty on it appears to have been exorbitant in comparison with its value. Chopin mentions 500 francs duty; George Sand at first says 700 francs. The actual amount paid was 300, not 400 as she forgetfully insists in *Un Hiver à Majorque*; but even this amount, plus package and freight back, for twenty-nine days' usage, works out expensively. The instrument must have been adequate, however, for some excellent compositions resulted from these ghastly three months.

This honeymoon was even more lamentable than Musset's honeymoon in Venice. The poet did not want to work, and was annoyed with his mistress for being occupied so continually. Chopin was aching to finish the *Preludes*, which must have been waiting only for their final revision, besides wanting to get on with the various compositions, from Op. 35 to Op. 41, all of which were probably completed before his departure. He was not jealous of the time his companion gave to her work; once he had his piano he could be just as fully occupied.

Evidently the snap of winter was far sharper than usual and lasted much longer. The howling of the wind, the beating of the rain, the viciousness of the thunder and lightning, the lovely yew and cypress trees covered with snow – all these depressed the invalid. The sun and the tropical vegetation had given him joy in his solitude, but now there was nothing gladdening to gaze upon. Wild weather and tempestuous seas prevented ships from arriving or departing, so that his avenue of escape was blocked. He must have been a pitiful object. His sorrow went into his work.

This depression reacted in a frightful manner on Chopin's nerves. He could not bear to be left alone in the house – in fact, he was almost demoralized. Any extraneous noise, a sudden gust of wind howling through the long corridor or a creaking in the roof, would put him on edge and drive him nearly out of his senses. One evening – it happened to be Shrove Tuesday – whilst the party were quietly talking and reading, strange and unearthly noises were heard. They peeped through the door but could see nothing, not even a light, yet the sounds emanated from the inside. After a few minutes' watching a faint light appeared, first white, then red from torches; the light was fol-

lowed by a gang of ruffianly-looking people mostly dressed as devils in all sorts of guises – horned-devils, she-devils, he-devils, all odious, and then the Devil himself, dressed in black. The noise, which resembled the sifting of pebbles, turned out to be castanets, whilst guitars and badly played violins were attempting to make music. The rhythm of the castanets soon stirred the revellers to dance their *jotas* and *fandangos*, which suddenly ceased, and were succeeded by the singing in unison of a *coplita*, a certain phrase that keeps on repeating itself and never seems to end; with its monotonous reiterations it is more African than European, like an Arabic wail. The terror of the first few ghostly moments soon passed, and the onlookers were forced to laugh at their absurd lack of control.

On another occasion Chopin's nerves were much more severely tested. George Sand and her children were fond of roaming about the huge building and exploring the ruins, and often Chopin was alone for several hours at a time. Though he was firmly convinced that the cell was full of phantoms and ghosts, George Sand seems quite certain that many of his finest inspirations occurred during these lonely hours when his thoughts were of the blackest and his soul terrified. Perhaps she would deliberately leave him alone for that reason, for she certainly was capable of thinking the world would credit her with the birth of these beauties. However, if her story is true and is not too vividly drawn by her novelist's imagination, it was during one of these lonely spells that Chopin conceived one of his masterpieces. George Sand and Maurice (no mention is made of Solange in the account in the *Histoire de ma Vie*) had been to Palma to buy some necessities. In the evening the rain fell so heavily that many of the mountain torrents overflowed. It took them six hours to walk three leagues in this terrible downpour, the driver of the *voiture* having abandoned them after various hairbreadth escapes; and they arrived back in the middle of the night shoeless and almost exhausted by their experiences. When they entered Chopin was playing a wonderful prelude – a sudden inspiration. He was in tears, but his playing enraptured them. As he finished he turned and saw them. He got up immediately with a wild and desperate look in his eyes and almost dementedly cried out, 'Ah! I knew well

that you were dead!' After recovering himself he became aware of their wretched condition and begged to be told of all their dangers. He then related that this music had come to him as in a dream, that in his anxiety for their safety he felt himself losing consciousness while playing, believing that he was being lulled to his own death. He could see himself drowning in a lake; could feel icy water regularly falling on his chest like the pulsation of his heart. On being reminded that these regular taps were still falling, but on the roof instead, he became annoyed. He would not admit that he had even heard the raindrops on the roof – for this would be against all his principles of sound-imitation. A composer heard the harmonies in his soul, the rhythms were part of his being – they could not be conceived in any other fashion. Out of this nightmare was born one of the *Twenty-four Preludes*, Op. 28.

It has long been falsely believed by many that the exquisite masterpieces known as the *Preludes* of Chopin were composed in Majorca. His pupil, Gutmann, emphatically declares that they were all written before he left France, that he himself copied them out. This does not agree with the letters to Fontana. In an undated letter belonging to 1837, Chopin asks Fontana to 'copy out the A flat Prelude; I want to give it to Perthuis'. On November 14, 1838, he informs Fontana that he 'will soon receive some Preludes': on December 3 he complains that his illness 'has affected the Preludes' – December 14: 'I think I shall soon send you the Preludes', and then 'December 28: 'I can't send you the Preludes; they aren't finished'. On January 12, 1839, however, Fontana is told 'I send you the Preludes. Copy them, you and Wolff; I think there are no errors. Give the copy to Probst and the manuscript to Pleyel'.

As we have seen, Chopin did not receive his pianoforte until January 15 and George Sand makes out in *Un Hiver à Majorque* that it was on that very day that she and Maurice journeyed to Palma to settle with the customs officers and to arrange for its transport. As some of her dates and statements in this romance do not tally with her letters, it is difficult to make any definite assertion. It hardly seems likely that the 'raindrop' Prelude (to use her name for it) was composed after the set had been despatched to Paris, nor can we suppose that the set was incom-

plete or that the newly inspired one was substituted for an older one. It is much more likely that Madame Sand muddled up the dates in her book, which was not written until fifteen years later. Chopin would not have told Fontana on November 14 that he would soon be receiving the Preludes if they had not been nearly finished. He had not left Palma by that date, Madame Sand not having yet found a house to live in; more than probably he had no piano to work on. We all know that he was an exceptionally slow workman and could not be satisfied until every detail was as he wished. In the face of these facts we should feel assured that most, if not quite all of the Preludes, were written before he left Paris, and that he wanted a final revision to please his critical judgement before supplying them to Pleyel and accepting the remaining 1,500 francs to close the transaction. We also know that he was in need of money. Most of the Preludes began as sketches and ideas and improvisations jotted down at the moment, to be incorporated into larger works if required. Then came the idea of collecting them in a set for all the twenty-four keys – an idea for which the world has never ceased to be grateful.

Now comes the vexed question of which Prelude is the one alluded to by George Sand and nicknamed 'raindrop'. I cannot help thinking that No. 15 in *D flat*, with its continuous pulsating A flats and G sharps is the one meant, more particularly because of the monk-like procession occupying the whole middle section. This section was bound to appeal to George Sand's imagination on a first hearing. It also has an emotional climax which neither of the other favoured ones has. Most writers have chosen No. 6 in *B minor*, because of its reiterated B, which certainly can suggest falling drops of water; but to me this Prelude is too exquisite and too delicate to permit of any description. Liszt maintained that it was No. 8 in *F sharp minor*, but this I do not understand; under pressure one could imagine a fine shower of rain being depicted by the rapid sequence of its light-sounding notes, but never 'drops of icy-cold water regularly falling on his chest'.

There is only one further known letter of Chopin from Majorca after January 12 – that to Camille Pleyel written on January 22. This letter, the original of which is in the possession

of M. Cortot, was first published in the 'Collection Polonaise' edition of the letters in 1933, and is as follows:

DEAR FRIEND, —

At last I am sending you my preludes — that I have finished on your *piano*, which arrived in the best possible condition, in spite of the sea, the bad weather, and the customs-house at Palma. I have instructed Fontana to give you my manuscript. I want for it 1,500 francs for France and England. Probst as you know has the rights for 1,000 francs for Härtel in Germany. I have given no undertaking to Wessel in London; he can pay more. When you think of it, you can give the money to Fontana. I do not want to draw upon you here because I do not know any banker in Palma.

Since you have wished, so kindly, to take upon yourself the drudgery of being my editor — I must give you notice that there are some more manuscripts awaiting *your orders*. 1st, the *Ballade* [Op. 38]. For this *Ballade* — I want 1,000 for France and England. 2nd, *Two Polonaises* [Op. 40] (of which you know one in A) — for which I want 1,500 francs for all countries of the globe. 3rd, a *Third Scherzo* [Op. 39], same price as the *Polonaises* for all Europe. You will be saddled with these, if you wish it, month by month, until the arrival of the author, who will say more to you than he knows how to write. I have had no news of you except indirectly through Fontana, who has written that you are better. The organization of the posts here is marvellous. I have been waiting 3 months for a letter from my family from Warsaw! And your people! Mme Pleyel? — M. Mme Denoyers? Give them all my best wishes for the New Year. I look forward to a letter from you — a little little one — and love you as always,

Your most devoted

F. F. CHOPIN.

Pardon my spelling.

I see that I have not thanked you for the piano — and that I have talked about nothing but money. — I am positively a business man!

The only further news we have is in a letter from George Sand to Madame Marliani, also written on January 22. '... I find it difficult to tell you how much longer I shall remain here. That depends a little on the health of Chopin, which has

improved since my last letter, but which still needs the influence of a mild climate. This influence is not quickly felt when the health is so shattered.'

In her *Histoire de ma Vie* she writes:

Our stay at the Chartreuse in Valldemosa was a torture for him and a torment for me. Gentle, sprightly, charming in company, Chopin as an invalid was hopeless in close intimacy. . . . His senses were flayed alive; the crease of a rose-leaf, the shadow of a fly made him bleed. Except for myself and my children everything under this Spanish sky was hateful and repugnant to him. He was dying of impatience to leave. . . . I left the Chartreuse with a mixture of joy and sorrow. I would gladly have spent two or three years there alone with my children.

Even the advent of spring could not induce Chopin to stay longer. As soon as the weather improved and the normal steamship crossings were resumed, he was impatient to get away. The improvement in his health mentioned on January 22 was not maintained, so he could not look forward to a further stay with pleasure. To make matters worse the unpleasant Maria Antonia was stirring up trouble amongst the villagers. They loudly proclaimed the fact that the invalid was going to hell both because of his disease and his neglect of confession. On this account they would refuse to bury him in consecrated ground if he should die, which they firmly believed would be the case, and as nobody else would give up any ground for his body, his friends would have to make their own arrangements.

At 3 p.m. on February 13 the party left Palma for Barcelona, where they arrived the following day. The Pleyel pianoforte had been left behind; it was sold to a M. Ernest Canut for 1,200 francs. The journey down to the coast from Valldemosa was another nightmare. No one would provide a carriage for fear of infection, so Chopin had to make the trip in a primitive cart, known as a *birlocho*, a terribly fatiguing experience. On reaching Palma he had a violent attack of hæmorrhage, but insisted on going aboard. The passage was not as enjoyable as the previous one from Barcelona, chiefly because of the noises and smells of the hundred pigs on board, which were far more

important as freight in the eyes of the captain. This worthy man would only allow Chopin to sleep in the worst cabin on the ship as the mattress would have to be burned. The spitting of blood had increased during the journey to such an extent that on his arrival at Barcelona he lost 'bowls-full of blood'. At once Madame Sand despatched a note to the commandant of the French maritime station telling him of the alarming condition of her patient. The travellers were taken off immediately and received by the French Consul, who arranged for their transference to a French sloop, where the doctor could attend to Chopin and stem the persistent bleeding. No wonder the party greeted the French flag with cries of 'Vive la France!'.

On February 15 George Sand wrote to Madame Marliani: 'Here I am in Barcelona. God grant that I can leave soon and that I never again set foot in Spain. It is a country that I am not in harmony with.' She also tells her friend to warn Grzymala not to mention the seriousness of Chopin's illness to his family.

The bleeding stopped after twenty-four hours, and the patient made a quick convalescence. After a week's rest they all went on board the *Phénicien* once more, this time to Marseilles, where they arrived on February 25. Chopin was given the captain's berth, a treatment slightly different from that which he had received from the Spaniards. To the end these people behaved disgracefully. The hotel proprietor in Barcelona tried to make Chopin buy a new bed, saying that the police would force him to burn the one the invalid had slept in. Yet the inhabitants of Palma ever since have not objected to extracting money from visitors who wish to visit the places where Chopin stayed.

The day after arriving in Marseilles George Sand wrote to Madame Marliani:

A month more and we should have died in Spain, Chopin and I; he of melancholy and disgust, I of fury and indignation. . . . I shall never forgive them, and if I ever write of them it will be with gall.

The whole of this episode makes one of the most pathetic and poignant stories that one can read. Chopin had made the

great effort in search of a cure. Instead, he returned a beaten and broken man, his body battered by the ravages of the fast-developing disease, his spirit broken almost to the point of despair. He had gathered together sufficient courage to break down the barrier of propriety. He had determined to withstand public criticism of his action, for he felt powerless to resist the fascination and the domination of his mistress's personality. He could never forget her care and her patience with him; but the exhilaration of love, the indefinable something that compels the uniting of two souls, the comradeship which cannot bear separation, were these still a part of his existence? Was he not already made conscious of maternal love taking the place of heart-love? He knew that he possessed little if any self-reliance, but he wanted more from this woman than nursing. No one yet had really loved or understood him, and he had pinned all his faith to George Sand. One cannot help feeling that had his ardent affection been as ardently reciprocated his mind would not have allowed his malady to conquer his body so completely. And yet we cannot pour scorn on George Sand. Love to her meant infatuation. At least she did not leave Chopin to travel back alone, as she did Musset, and for some years more she mothered and nurtured him; but the glamour of love had ceased, and this his sensitive nature felt all too acutely. •

Although he suffered and lost almost all his physical resistance, the trip had its compensations. One has only to glance at the texture of his works conceived in Majorca, to hear the richer beauties of his harmonies, and feel the greater depth of their emotional fervour, in order to realize the influence of this tragic episode. Whether it was his love for this strange man-woman, or the incomplete realization of it, or his feebleness, or the beauty of the island, little of which he was able to see, or the expansion of his mind through contact with hers, or the compound result of all these factors that caused this development it is impossible to say. But there can be no gainsaying that he returned to Paris not only a changed man, but a nobler, loftier, more ethereal and more poetic artist.

## RECUPERATION

1839

MADAME SAND had contemplated installing her family in a furnished house in the lovely country that surrounds the ancient and interesting old port of Marseilles, but after several fruitless searchings decided on the Hotel de Beauveau, which is situated almost on the *Vieux Port* – a curious choice when she had an invalid to consider. Her first thought was to look up her old friend, the well-known physician Dr. Cauvières. He examined Chopin, found him extremely weak, but not beyond repair, and expressed the opinion that after a period of rest and sunshine and the wearing of cupping-glasses he would recover. He advised remaining in the Midi until the beginning of summer, which was not at all pleasing news for Madame Sand's ears, for she found Marseilles extremely dull, too full of merchants and shopkeepers, and with hardly any intellectual life. She made the best of it, however, evidently determined not to be accused of forsaking her protégé this time.

Soon all the artistic people and musicians of the city heard of the coming of this famous couple, and Chopin and George Sand were forced to barricade themselves against the onslaught. Chopin, in particular, desired privacy, not only because of his frailty, but because of his hatred for publicity. He writes to Fontana on March 6: 'My door is shut to all musical and literary amateurs'. The soft climate soon had a beneficial effect, and before long he was able to take walks, play his pianoforte and talk rationally in a more or less normal voice. As soon as his strength permitted he set about putting his affairs in order. His letters, chiefly to Fontana, are enlightening, and show us another side to his character, not always pleasant. They are mainly concerned with the selling of his manuscripts, and poor Fontana is continually being harassed. At the beginning of March (Scharlitt gives March 2, Opienski March 7), he writes to Fontana:

You have doubtless heard from Grzymala about my health and my manuscripts. Two months ago [January 12] I sent you my Preludes from Palma. From these (after copying them for Probst) you were to give Leo a thousand; and from the fifteen hundred that Pleyel was to give you for the preludes, I asked you to pay Nougie, and one quarter to the landlord. In the same letter, if I am not mistaken, I asked you to give up the lodging, which, unless it can be let for April, will have to be paid for till the next quarter day (I think till July). You have probably used Wessel's money to pay the New Year quarter; but if not, please use it for this quarter. [As we shall see further on in the letter, Chopin had imagined that he might not return to Paris alive and had asked Fontana in January to get rid of his flat] . . . Now, if – which I doubt – the lodging is let by next month, share the furniture between you three: Grzymala, Jasio and you. Jasio [Matuszynski] has more space, – though not more sense in his head, to judge by the childish letter he has written me, thinking I am going to become a Carmelite. Give Jasio the most useful lumber. Don't bother Grzymala with much; take what you want yourself. I don't know whether I shall come back to Paris in the summer, so you keep it. We will write to each other, and if my lodging has to be kept on till June, which is likely, please, even if you have another lodging of your own, stay in mine with one foot, for I shall come on you for the payment of the last three months. In the second polonaise you have a sincere and truthful answer to your letter; – it is not my fault that I am like that fungus which looks like a mushroom, but poisons those who pull it up and taste it, mistaking it for something else. I know that I have never been any use to anyone – but also not very much to myself. I told you that in the bureau, in the first drawer from the door, there is a roll, which either you or Grzymala or Jasio might open – now I beg you to take it out and burn it *unread*. Do this, I beg you, for our friendship; that paper is no longer needed.

This sounds very much as if he had made a will. The polonaise referred to is the *A major* from Op. 40, which is dedicated to Fontana. Anton Wodzinski had evidently borrowed some money from Chopin, for he asks Fontana not to mention the matter to Anton if he goes away without paying: 'it is a bad Polish trick'. He also asks Fontana if the new manuscripts had

reached him, 'for they spent a long time at the custom house, and on the sea, and again at the custom house'.

Sending the Preludes, I wrote to Pleyel that I will give him the Ballade [Op. 38] (which the German, Dr. Probst, has) for a thousand; for two Polonaises [Op. 40] (for France, England and Germany, as the Probst *engagement* ends with the Ballade) I have asked fifteen hundred. I think that is not too much. So, after receiving the other manuscripts, you should have two thousand five hundred, and from Probst five hundred for the Ballade (or six hundred I don't quite remember), which, together, makes three thousand. I asked Grzymala to send me at least five hundred at once (which need not interfere with sending the rest on quickly).

It is a long and rambling letter, and shows signs of lack of mental control, obviously due to his weakness. But it clearly proves his worry over financial matters and his desire to get as big a price as possible for his manuscripts. This is the first occasion that we find him demanding his price, but it will not be the last. About his health he tells his friend that the doctors were not allowed to bleed him, that he has vesicators, that he only coughs in the morning, and that he is not regarded as a consumptive. 'I drink no coffee, nor wine, – only milk; I keep warm and look like a girl.'

On March 6 he writes a shorter letter to Fontana:

. . . I should very much like to have my Preludes dedicated to Pleyel (there's probably still time, as they are not printed). And the Ballade to Mr. Robert Schumann. The Polonaises to you as they are. To Kessler nothing. If Pleyel does not want to give up the Ballades, then dedicate the Preludes to Schumann.

To Pleyel was dedicated the French edition of the Preludes, Kessler having the German; to Schumann, the Ballade; to Fontana, the Polonaises.

The two succeeding letters to Fontana, March 10 and 17, are almost entirely taken up with the sale of these manuscripts. Only excerpts will be quoted, for they are too alike to make interesting reading. In the first one Chopin thanks Fontana for

'running about' so much, and then begins his tirade on the 'pigs' and 'Jews'.

I did not expect that Pleyel would Jew me; but, if so, please give him this letter. I think he won't cause you any trouble about the Ballade and the Polonaise. But, in the opposite event, get 500 for the Ballade from Probst, and then take it to Schlesinger. If I have got to deal with Jews, let it at least be Orthodox ones. Probst may swindle me even worse, for he's a sparrow whose tail you can't salt. Schlesinger has always cheated me; but he has made a lot out of me, and won't want to refuse another profit; only be polite to him, because the Jew likes to pass for somebody. So, if Pleyel makes even the smallest difficulties, you will go to Schlesinger and tell him that I will give him the Ballade for France and England for 800 (he won't give 1,000), and the Polonaises for Germany, France and England for 1,500 (and if he won't give that, then for 1,400, or 1,300, or even 1,200). . . . I might break with Schlesinger for Pleyel, but not for Probst. What good is it to me if Schlesinger makes Probst pay more for my manuscripts? If Probst pays more to Schlesinger, it is proof that he has cheated me, paying less. Probst has no shop in Paris; all my things are printed at Schlesinger's. The Jew has always paid me, and Probst has often made me wait. You will have to arrange with Schlesinger, that you give him the manuscripts on the day when he gives you the money; if he won't give for both at once, then give the Ballade separately and the Polonaises separately; but not more than two weeks between. If Schlesinger won't hear of this, only then go to Probst; but, as he is such an adorer of mine, don't drop on him, as you can on Pleyel. . . . If, which I doubt, you have already given Pleyel the manuscript of the Ballades and Polonaises, take them away, for Schlesinger or Probst. The scoundrels! – Good Lord, that Pleyel, who is such an adorer of mine! Perhaps he thinks I shan't come back to Paris? I shall come back, and shall pay a visit of thanks to him, and another to Leo.

It is difficult to understand Chopin's attitude towards Pleyel. He was grateful to him for advancing the 500 francs for the *Preludes*, and was apparently satisfied with a further 1,500 francs for the set, though even this is strange in comparison with his demanding 1,500 francs for the Polonaises, Op. 40. Yet he is

willing to let the Op. 40 go to Schlesinger for 1,200 francs if Pleyel refuses them. Probst is always used as the last resort – evidently he was less generous. Chopin mistrusted all the publishers, and was determined to extract the last penny from them. Perhaps he had every reason for his treatment of them – but his vague methods cannot be admired. Fontana certainly had a thankless task.

At the end of the same letter Chopin asks his friend to settle some accounts, and makes another hasty reference to the behaviour of Anton Wodzinski. As we have seen, he had lent some money to this friend of his youth and had evidently written to Anton's parents about the matter.

They must have forgotten themselves strangely for such a thing to happen as has happened between him and me. *Entendons nous*; he did not return the money to me before he left. A brainless and heartless fool!

Chopin was straining every nerve to collect money. His independent nature rebelled against his dependency on George Sand, who, after all, could not be feeling rich at the moment. In trying to recover the debt from his old school friend he discovered the shallowness of his heart and character. We hardly ever hear of Anton again.

In the next letter, March 17, Chopin is still adamant.

Pleyel's a fool and Probst a rascal (he never gave me 1,000 francs for three manuscripts). . . . Now I wish, and beg you, give my letter to Pleyel [presumably the letter of March 10] (who finds my manuscripts too dear). If I have to sell them cheap, I would rather let it be to Schlesinger than search for impossible new connections. As Schlesinger can always count on England, and as I am quits with Wessel, let him sell to whom he likes. [Wessel & Co. were the original publishers in England of Chopin's works. Edwin Ashdown & Co. are now the successors.] The same with the Polonaises in Germany; for Probst is a sly bird; I know him of old. Let Schlesinger sell to whom he likes, not necessarily to Probst. It's nothing to me. He adores me, because he's skinning me. Only have a clear understanding with him about the money, and don't give up the manuscripts except for cash.

I will send Pleyel a receipt. The fool, can't he trust either me or you? Good Lord, why must one have dealings with scoundrels! That Pleyel, who told me that Schlesinger was underpaying me, and now finds 500 francs too much for a manuscript for all countries! Well, I prefer to do business with a real Jew. And Probst is a rascal to pay me 300 francs for the mazurkas! [Op. 41]. Why, the last mazurkas brought me 800 at the first jump: Probst 300, Schlesinger 400 and Wessel 100. I would rather sell my manuscripts for nothing as in the old days, than have to bow and scrape to such fools. And I'd rather be humiliated by one Jew than by three. So let's go to Schlesinger. I hope you have finished with Pleyel. – Scoundrels, scoundrels, they and Madame Migneron! When you come to make shoes for the cobbler, I beg you, make none for Pleyel or Probst: let them go barefoot. . . . I'm still amazed at Wodzinski.

The Mazurkas referred to above were the *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 33. It would be interesting to know how much Chopin received for all the different works, but this is almost impossible to find out. Although the above amounts appear very small to us in these days, for we have to bear in mind that the rights belonged to the publishers and that royalties did not exist, he probably was considered to be quite well paid.

There is another letter to Fontana, undated, which Opienski marks March, Karasowski, with his usual gift for inaccuracy, saying it was written from Valldemosa in February, which is definitely wrong. Niecks says April; but if we examine the letter to Grzymala on March 27, we shall find this is too late. It is in reply to a letter from Fontana in which the latter answered the various questions and orders of the letter of March 17.

If they're such Jews, hold back everything till I come. The Preludes are sold to Pleyel (I have received 500 francs) – so I suppose he has the right to wipe the other side of his belly with them; but as for the Ballade and Polonaises, don't sell them, either to Schlesinger or to Probst. I will have nothing to do with any Schönbergers at any time. [Schönberger was another Jewish publisher in Paris.] So if you have given the Ballade to Probst – take it away, even if he would give a thousand. . . . We have had enough of these fools, both you and I. You have

dragged round like a real friend, and now you will have my house-moving on your shoulders. Ask Grzymala to pay the moving expenses. About the porter, he is certainly lying; but who is going to prove it – you will have to give it to him to avoid a row. . . . Tell Jasio that no doubt neither he nor I will get either a word or a penny out of Anton. . . . If you liked Clara Wieck, you were right: she plays – no one better. If you see her, greet her from me, and her Father too.

Chopin is obviously tiring of his transactions and Fontana must have been disgusted with them. It is pleasant to notice Chopin admiring the artistry of Clara Wieck – she did not become Clara Schumann until the following year.

The next recorded letter is to Grzymala on March 27.

I am much better, and can thank you more vigorously for sending the money. You know, I wonder at your goodwill; but also you have in me a grateful man at heart, though not on the outside. You are so kind as to accept my furniture; please pay for the moving. I venture to ask this last, because I know it won't be a large sum. As for what is happening to my income, the Lord defend me! That idiot Pleyel has made mincemeat of my affairs; but it's difficult; you can't knock a wall down with your head.

We shall meet in the summer, and I will tell you how glad of it I am. My lady has just finished a magnificent article on Goethe, Byron and Mickiewicz. One must read it; it gladdens the heart. I can see you, how pleased you will be. And all so true, so large in perception, on so huge a scale, of necessity, without manipulation or panegyrics. . . . Marseilles is ugly: an old, but not ancient place; it bores us rather. Next month we shall probably go to Avignon, and from there to Nohant. There, no doubt, we shall embrace you, not by letter, but whiskers and all, if your whiskers have not gone the way of my *favoris*.

This is the first occasion on which he has mentioned George Sand in any of the known letters.

In his next letter to the same friend, April 12, Chopin discusses the problem of his mother coming to Paris because of his 'frightening' symptoms. He cannot believe that the project will

take shape, for his father 'is out of health and needs her more than ever'. Grzymala has been ill and Chopin is asking him if he would not like to be looked after by him himself. 'I have been taught how to look after people! . . . I have never been of any use to you, but perhaps I should be able to nurse you now.' He also alludes to his mistress. 'My Angel is finishing a new novel: *Gabriel*. To-day she is writing in bed all day. You know, you would love her even more if you knew her as I know her to-day.'

April 25 sees another letter to Fontana. Scharlitt gives the date as March 25, but this must be wrong because of the allusion to the house-moving, which has already taken place, and to Nourrit's death. Adolphe Nourrit was one of the best tenor singers of his day. Liszt admired him and was his friend. Born in 1802, he made his first appearance at the *Opéra* in Paris in 1821 and from then until he retired in 1837 was the idol of the Parisians. This early retirement was due to the appointment of another tenor, Duprez, for Nourrit refused to share the honours. He left Paris and eventually sang at the San Carlo in Naples. One night, after singing at a benefit concert, he became depressed about his voice, convincing himself that it was going off. In a fit of despair he threw himself out of a window and was instantaneously killed. This happened in 1839, and made a profound impression on all his colleagues. His body was brought to Marseilles and a memorial service held in Notre-Dame-du-Mont on April 24. Chopin was asked by the singer's widow to play the organ at the service. 'Yesterday I played the organ for Nourrit, so I am better. There was a funeral mass, and the family asked me to play, so I played during the Elevation.' George Sand wrote to Madame Marliani three days later about the sorrowful occasion, for they were all great friends of the deceased.

I do not know if the singers did it on purpose, but I have never heard anything so false. Chopin devotedly played the organ at the Elevation; what an organ! a false instrument screaming — it had no wind except to blow it out of tune. However, your *little one* pulled out as much sound as possible. He used the least shrill stops and played *Les Astres* [*Die Gestirne* of

Schubert], not in the exalted and glorious manner of Nourrit, but with a sweet and plaintive tone, like a distant echo from another world.

Madame Sand then goes on to say that many of the large congregation had paid their 50 centimes admission expressly to hear Chopin and were disappointed with his small sounds; also, that they were further disappointed at not seeing her.

In the letter to Fontana Chopin speaks of the warm weather and of his intention to remain in the south for some time yet; and finishes with more venom against the Jews.

Keep my manuscripts so that they may not chance to appear in print before they are given. If the Preludes are printed, it's a trick of Probst's. All that when I come back; then we shan't be *pratzi-pratzu*. [Supposed German-Jewish pronunciation of the French 'bras dessus, bras dessous', arm-in-arm] Germans, Jews, rascals, scoundrels, offal, dog-hangers etc. etc. In short, you can finish the litany, for you know them now as well as I do.

One can hazard a guess that his epithets were even viler in Polish. Money was his god at the moment – even his three poor friends had to contribute. He also asked Fontana if Clara Wieck had played well; and why she couldn't choose something better than just the least interesting of the études – 'at least for those who do not know that it is on the black keys?' Clara had given a recital in Paris on April 16, and had played the 'black-note' Study, Op. 10, No. 5.

One evening, when Chopin was '*dans les bras de Morphée*', George Sand wrote to Madame Marliani:

He is an angel, his goodness, his tenderness and his patience at times disturb me. I imagine that his organization is too delicate, too exquisite and too perfect to live for long in our gross and heavy earthly life. When sick to death at Majorca he made music that had the very savour of paradise, but I am so used to seeing him in the clouds that it seems to me that neither death nor life mean anything to him. He himself hardly knows in what planet he exists; he has no conception of life as we conceive and feel it.

During the first days of May a short trip to Genoa was undertaken by George Sand, her children and Chopin. He had been slowly getting stronger, and was looking forward to his first glimpses of Italy, the country he had always wanted to see. George Sand was also longing to see this lovely coast again. She had vivid remembrances of her previous visit with Alfred de Musset in the late autumn of 1833, for Genoa saw some of their happiest moments; perhaps a passage in a letter to Madame Marliani written from Marseilles on May 20 can be interpreted as a hint of regret. 'I do not like journeys any more, or rather I am not in a condition to enjoy them.' She blames the responsibility of a family, but that is not quite the truth.

Chopin, naturally, was too feeble to visit many of the galleries or palaces, but his companion, with her son Maurice, saw 'all the beautiful edifices and all the beautiful pictures that this charming town possesses'. On the return journey, a strong wind blew up, the sea became rough, and Chopin was very seasick. This necessitated a few days' rest at the house of Dr. Cauvières, and on the morning of May 22 they all left Marseilles. At Arles, Madame Sand's carriage awaited them to convey them back to Nohant, which was reached during the last days of the month. Here Chopin was told that he must stay all the summer. He was examined at once by the family doctor, Papet, who found somewhat surprisingly that the patient had no pulmonary complaint, merely a chronic affection of the larynx which he did not hope to cure, but which was not seriously alarming. He proposed a long rest in the country and careful and rigorous attention. Paris was not to be considered before the autumn.

Here was a problem for this otherwise astute woman. She had not pictured such a domestic tangle. She had imagined, without doubt, before embarking on the Majorca venture, that a few months would suffice, that Chopin's health would be restored, that the physical attraction would have ceased, and that she would be free to go back to respectable family life once again. But Chopin was not better in health – he was much worse; and he needed more 'maternal' care now than before. George Sand had not contemplated their living openly together. She did not know whether she wanted to, nor, for that matter, whether Chopin did, for the problem had never been thrashed

out. The *liaison* had happened as if decreed by fate. He was helpless at the moment and wanted a woman's care, and though we may criticize her, she was kind-hearted and was a good nurse. She admired his genius, and his music gave her great emotional pleasure. In her *Histoire de ma Vie* she has put down some of her reflections; to quote a few passages would help us to understand her dilemma.

A kind of terror possessed my heart in the presence of a new duty to be faced. I was not deceived by passion. I had for the artist a kind of maternal adoration that was very ardent, very true, but which could not for an instant vie with maternal love, the only chaste feeling that can be passionate.

I was still young enough, perhaps, to have to struggle against love, against real passion. This uncertainty of my age, of my situation and of the fate of artistic women, above all when they have a horror of transient distractions, terrified me, and, determined never to submit to any influence which could separate me from my children, I saw a lesser, but still a possible danger even in the tender friendship inspired in me by Chopin.

Well, on reflection, this danger disappeared and even assumed an opposite character, that of a defence against emotions that I wished never again to experience. One more duty in my life, already so full and so crushed with weariness, seemed to me to be one more chance for the austerity towards which I felt myself drawn by a kind of religious enthusiasm.

Here we see her finding in herself a new virtue – self-sacrifice. She will be able to guard herself against new love-affairs by devoting herself to the invalid. She convinced herself by way of consolation that the only true passion in Chopin's life was his mother.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### NOHANT

1839-1841

IF we had only Chopin's letter to Grzymala written on June 2, 1839, to judge from, we should conclude that the country held a strong appeal for him. It was written immediately after reaching Nohant, and he talks of the beautiful village, of the nightingales and the skylarks. But less than five weeks later his tone has changed; he is not so well and his companion is ailing. He is growing impatient with Grzymala for not hurrying to Nohant and gives instructions how to get there. Madame Sand adds a postscript begging the Count not to disappoint Chopin, for she is afraid that the patient is becoming bored with his loneliness and she does not know how to cheer him up in his solitude.

The truth is that Chopin, with all his love for solitude, did not like the simple country life. For a mind so sensitive and a soul so poetic it is strange that the beauties of nature and the joy of every living animal and bird had so little attraction for him. The ease and spaciousness of Nohant satisfied his desire for comfort, and, judging from the works which resulted from his visits there, its tranquillity enabled him to concentrate; yet, on reading his letters to his two great friends of this period, one feels that he was hankering after Paris all the while. Perhaps the restlessness so common with consumptives was already affecting his peace of mind, for we shall find him continually on the move from now onwards. He loved the thought of solitude, but he hated to be alone; and evidently George Sand, from her own recorded observations, was occupied most of the day in superintending her children's lessons and most of the night studying encyclopædias or writing novels. For all that, Chopin was working hard, as can be seen from his letters.

On August 10 (according to Scharlitt) he writes to Fontana that he is busy with the *B flat minor Sonata*, Op. 35. He mentions an Allegro, a Scherzo in E flat minor, a March 'which

you already have', and a short Finale of about three pages, the left hand of which is in unison with the right, 'gossiping after the March'. He has also composed a *Nocturne in G major*, as a companion to the *G minor*, Op. 37, 'which you may remember'. Reference is made to the *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 41, the first of which he says dates from Palma, the other three from Nohant. 'They seem to me good, as is always the case with younger children, when the parents are growing old.' We must conclude then that the March of the Sonata was written in Palma, and the work completed at Nohant during the summer, probably from sketches made in Majorca. This disposes of the belief that it was all composed during that disastrous search for health. The *G minor Nocturne* must also have been born in Palma, for Fontana to have seen it before.

Another item to be gleaned from this interesting letter is that Chopin is correcting the Paris edition of Bach – 'not only the engraver's mistakes, but also the mistakes hallowed by those who are supposed to understand Bach. (I have no pretensions to understand better, but I do think that sometimes I can guess).' He asks for a copy of Weber for four hands, presumably for playing duets with Solange; he is still harping on the knavishness of the publishers, and informs his friend that his *Sonata*, Op. 4 has been published at last by Haslinger and that the Germans praise it. This news he received from his father, but as the Sonata was not published until 1851, someone must have been misinformed. Titus is heard of again after a long interval; he is now married and has two boys. He had asked Chopin to write an oratorio, and was answered by Chopin in a letter to his parents asking 'why does Titus start a sugar refinery instead of a Camaldolite or Dominican monastery?', adding that he is still fond of his school friend, but that Titus's imagination is still that of a schoolboy.

Let us try to picture Chopin's life at Nohant. He got up late, presumably breakfasting in his room. Until the early evening he spent most of his time indoors, for he was always a bad walker and his convalescence would not allow much exercise. His pianoforte and his manuscripts occupied his attention most of the time until five o'clock. Between five and six the family had dinner, usually outside on the terrace. After dinner was

George Sand's time for relaxation, and Chopin chose this moment to play to her, perhaps discussing his creative work of the day, but most probably improvising and playing his favourite pieces. She was an excellent listener, for if she did not understand the intricacies of the art, she at least could appreciate the emotional and æsthetic side of music. This hour or so was her greatest joy, and she never failed to express her gratitude to Chopin for the solace his music gave her. It also appealed to her conceit to think that she was the favoured audience for the expression of his feelings. In these moments of contentment and bliss she was willing to be his chosen companion, for her poetic nature responded to his artistic ideals; but later in the evening when she was alone (for Chopin was treated like a child and put to bed early), her clear brain would visualize the impossibility of continuing such a relationship. Her passion for this sickly genius had evaporated, but she could not banish her admiration and her maternal love. For once in her life she did not know what to decide – time and fate would decide for her.

As the autumn draws near Chopin and George Sand turn their thoughts towards Paris. They have decided not to live together there, but she has insisted on their apartments being near enough for her watchful eye to attend to his wants. He therefore writes to Grzymala on September 20:

Please take a small apartment, or, if it is too late for that, a large one; so long as you get something. As for her apartment, she thinks it is too dear, and cannot be persuaded that it is better to pay more, rather than have a lot of lodgers in the house. Please don't go beyond her instructions. . . .

To this letter is affixed a long postscript by George Sand adding her injunctions and insisting that Chopin's apartment has its windows facing the south. The following day Chopin writes to Fontana and asks him, if possible, to rent the apartment at 5, Rue Tronchet. Five days later he again writes to Fontana, but this time about the furnishings of the flat:

Choose a paper like my old *tourterelle* [dove-coloured] one, for both rooms; but varnished and shiny, with a narrow dark

green stripe for a border. For the vestibule something different, but good. If, however, there are any prettier and more fashionable papers, which you like and know that I shall also like, take them. I prefer them smooth, very plain and clean looking, rather than the common *épicier* type. That is why I like pearl-colour; it is neither glaring nor common-looking. Thanks for the servant's room; it is very necessary.

Now about furniture; it would be a splendid thing if you can manage it. As I love you, I did not dare to bother you about it, but since you are so kind, choose it and put it in. I will ask Grzymala to find the money for the moving. As for the bed and bureau, they will have to go to some furniture polisher to be scoured. . . . Also look round for a man-servant. Perhaps you can find some decent, honest Pole? Let him find his own food; not more than 80 [francs]. I shall be in Paris at the end of October, not before. Keep that to yourself. Oh, the spring mattress of my bed needs repairing; not if it would be expensive. Have the chairs and everything well beaten.

He signs this letter 'your old Chopin, with a longer nose than ever'.

We begin to see a more alert Chopin once more. For so long his letters have lacked vitality, as if nothing in the world but extracting money from his publishers meant anything to him. Now he is again interested in the amenities of life, though only in those pertaining to his own comfort. No one could envy Fontana. He is the factotum. What would Chopin have done without him? And Grzymala has always to find the money. Chopin was certainly fortunate to have two such willing helpers.

Grzymala is once more appealed to. On September 29 he is told that George Sand is worried because no apartment has been found for her.

If Fontana can be helpful to you, either for the running about or by replacing you, make use of him. He is willing to do anything for me, and a very efficient Englishman at business. . . . He is attending to my household stuff, and all I need ask of you is to pay the *voiture* for the moving. I'm sorry for your pocket; but it can't be helped, unless you want me to walk the streets, my first days in Paris.

Whether it was due to the improvement in Chopin's health, or to the prospect of seeing Paris once again, or to any other reason, we cannot conjecture, but his next letter to Fontana dated October 1 reads exactly like some of his youthful effusions. He begins by giving instructions:

Have the grey curtains, that were in my study by the piano, hung in the vestibule; and in the bedroom the ones that were in the bedroom before, only underneath them hang the pale muslin ones that were under the grey ones. I should like to have the wardrobe in the bedroom, if there is a good place for it, unless the living-room looks too bare between the windows. If the red sofa that stood in the dining-room can have white covers made of the same stuff as the chairs, it could be put in the drawing-room. But that will doubtless be difficult as it would mean finding an upholsterer who would wait till I arrive. . . . [Chopin is still as fastidious and as helpless as ever]. . . . Find me a manservant, and embrace Madame Leo (you will probably prefer the first commission, so if you carry it out, I will release you from the second). . . . If Moscheles is in Paris, order him an *enema* prepared by Cellini [Berlioz's Overture which was a *bête-noire* of Chopin] from Neukomm's Oratorios and Döhler's Concerto. He will certainly go to the *garderobe* and produce some sort of Valentine! A savage idea, but you will admit its originality! You can give Jasio for lunch, from me, a sphinx's beard and a parrot's kidneys in tomato sauce sprinkled with eggs from the microscopic world. And you yourself can take a bath in an infusion of whales, to restore you after all my commissions; I give them to you because I know that you willingly do for me as much as your time permits; and I'll gladly do the same for you when you marry.

By way of greeting his friends he adds: 'Puff at Madame Plater from me, and sneeze at Mlle Pauline. Thumb your nose at Oslawski and deafen the muddled young Niemcewicz with Orda [a Polish musician in Paris]'.

On October 4 he tells Fontana that he will be in Paris 'in five, six or seven days; and, for your head, for your neck, let me have paper and a bed, if not the rest. . . . I must hasten my journey, for George's presence is needed for His art'. What does Chopin mean by this? Does he refer to himself, or is he

making a joke about his companion? Then he gives orders about ordering a new hat from a M. Dupont.

He has my measure, and knows how light I need them. Let him give me this year's fashion, not exaggerated; I don't know how you dress now. Also go in, as you pass, to Dautremont, my tailor, and tell him to make me a pair of grey trousers at once. You can choose the shade of dark grey; winter trousers, good quality, without belt, smooth and stretchy. You're an Englishman, you know what I want. . . . Also a plain black velvet waistcoat, but with a tiny inconspicuous pattern, something very quiet and elegant. If he has nothing suitable, then a black stuff one, good and plain. I rely on you. Not very open; that's all.

There is no mention of Grzymala paying for these, so we can presume that French tailors are like their English *confrères* – they have heard of credit. Later in the same day Chopin must have heard from Fontana, for he writes again to his friend.

You're a priceless creature. The apartment sounds splendid; only why is it so cheap? . . . Once more, is it all right, does it not smell bad, or is it not dirty, or are there not so many neighbours that you can't go to the privy alone? Is there not a *cornet à piston* in the house, or some such thing? . . . Remember that for her it can't be just anyhow.

A couple of days later there is another letter with full description of an apartment or small *hôtel* for Madame Sand. It had to be private, elegant, not higher than the second floor – 'in short, something really good'. Her price can be 2,000 to 2,500 francs, even a few hundred more. She requires three bedrooms, two together and one shut off by the *salon* – a well-lit study; a dining-room and a *salon*. Two smaller rooms for servants, and a cellar. Parquet floors, of course. No smithy near and no girls; no bad smells, no smoke. 'Find it like lightning, by inspiration; something splendid, and near to me.'

This is a lengthy letter, and added to it was a sketch, drawn by Chopin, of the plan of the house, and a long list of possible streets put in by George Sand. Fontana must have had angelic

qualities as well as an all-seeing eye. On Monday, October 9, he is instructed to take both houses in the Rue Pigalle.

Hurry. Bargain if you can (taking both together), but if not, then take them for 2,500, and don't let it go, for it seems to us admirable; just splendid. She regards you as the best and most logical – and I add the most splenetic-angelic-Polish-souled of beloved friends.

The next day another letter:

The day after to-morrow, Thursday, we start at five in the morning, and at 3, 4, or at latest 5 we will be at Rue Tronchet No. 5. . . . As I am short of trousers, ask the tailor to be sure to have the grey ones that you ordered for me (and the waist-coat if possible) ready on Friday morning, so that I can change as soon as I arrive. . . . The same with the hat from Dupont; and in return I will alter the second half of the *Polonaise* for you till I die; perhaps yesterday's version won't please you either, though I cudgelled my brains over it for about 80 seconds. I have my manuscripts in order, properly annotated. There are six of them with your *Polonaises*, not counting the seventh, an *Impromptu*, which perhaps is poor; I don't know yet, it's too new (yes!). But I hope it's good; . . . because, by my reckoning, it ought to bring me at least 800 francs. . . . And, my dear, as you are so efficient a person, command that no black thoughts and choking cough shall come to me in the new lodging; wish that I may be kind, and wipe out for me, if you can, any past episodes. It would be good if I could still have a few years of big, completed work.

This last sentence looks as if Chopin knew that his life was to be cut short. The doctor in Marseilles had made clear the writing on the wall. It is interesting to hear that Chopin altered the middle section of the *A major Polonaise*, Op. 40, at Fontana's request. The *Impromptu* referred to is the *F sharp major*, Op. 36. It was published in May 1840, so Chopin must have grown to like it better.

The two friends travelled together to Paris, but there they separated, Chopin going to 5 Rue Tronchet and George Sand to 16 Rue Pigalle. But the latter could not live in her apartment for some time, if we can trust her letter to Dr. Papet at Nohant.

'I am at last installed in the Rue Pigalle, 16, but only during the last two days, after having riled, raged, pestered and sworn at the upholsterers, locksmith, etc. What a long, horrible, unbearable business it is to plant oneself here.' Chopin, on the other hand, found it was impossible to live separately after the family life he had led for almost a year. He gave up his apartment to Jasio and came to live at Rue Pigalle, on the lower floor of the 'pavillon' occupied by Maurice, Madame Sand and Solange living opposite. They all met for dinner, either in her rooms or in Chopin's. He had an understanding with Jasio that, if he ever came to Paris alone from Nohant, he was to have a room at his flat.

At once Chopin busied himself with lessons, and the house soon became a tramping-ground for his pupils and the Sand children's various professors. He seemed to have generated a fresh store of energy, and often surprised and delighted his pupils by playing them short recital programmes after their lessons. Bach was usually chosen for this purpose. Not only did he worship the '48', but he was anxious that his pupils should share his appreciation. His lessons usually went on until four or five in the afternoon, after which followed the same procedure as at Nohant except that intimate friends would visit them. All this would have been agreeable to George Sand had it not been for the eternal question of having to account for Chopin. Her children were growing up, and Chopin's presence at such close quarters was difficult to explain to them. Nor was it easy for her to maintain an attitude before her friends that satisfied her logic. They were practically all of the artistic *milieu*, but she did not wish to be known as Chopin's mistress, for this would tie her hands, nor did she relish the idea of being called his mother. It was an awkward predicament.

In the autumn of this year Chopin met Moscheles for the first time. Moscheles had for long wished to make his acquaintance, and now that he was in Paris his wish could be gratified. It was at the house of August Leo, a kinsman of Moscheles and, as we know, a friend of Chopin, that they met. 'Moscheles writes of this meeting:

His appearance is completely identified with his music — they are both delicate and *schwärmerisch*. He played to me in

compliance with my request, and I now for the first time understand his music, and all the raptures of the lady world became intelligible. . . . He professes a great attachment for my music, and at all events knows it perfectly. He played me some of his Studies and his latest work, the *Preludes*; I played in return several things of my own. . . . Chopin was lively, cheerful, nay, extremely funny in his imitations of Pixis, Liszt and a hump-backed pianoforte connoisseur.

The following afternoon Moscheles and his two sisters paid Chopin a visit and heard him play his *Sonata in B flat minor*, and his pupil, Gutmann, the *Scherzo in C sharp minor*. Gutmann tells a story which requires substantiating. He relates that Chopin had told him in the morning of Moscheles' promised visit, and, being anxious that the German-Jewish musician from London should hear the new Scherzo, Chopin requested him to play it, himself feeling too weak. 'I worked all day at it on Chopin's piano and was able to play it from memory to the composer's satisfaction.'

There was one work of Moscheles of which Chopin was extremely fond – the *Sonata in E flat* for four hands. He appears to have enjoyed duet-playing, and the two had played this together. The aide-de-camp to King Louis-Philippe, Count Perthuis, wrote to Moscheles and asked if the two musicians would perform the Sonata at Court, 'for the Royal Family wish to have the great treat I lately enjoyed'. At nine o'clock in the evening of October 29 Count Perthuis and his wife called for the two artists and took them to Saint-Cloud. Moscheles has described at some length the scene on arrival and the affability and courtesy shown them by the King and Queen and the members of the Court. He continues:

The Queen then asked if the instrument – a Pleyel – was placed as we liked it; was the lighting what we wanted? if the chairs were the right height, etc.; and was as anxious for our comfort as a Citizen Queen might well be. First of all Chopin played a *mélange* of Nocturnes and Études, and was extolled and admired as an old Court favourite. I followed with some old and new 'Studies', and was honoured with similar applause. We then sat down together at the instrument, he again playing

the bass, a thing he always insists on. The small audience now listened intently to my *E flat major Sonata*, which was interrupted by such exclamations as '*divin! délicieux!*' After the Andante the Queen whispered to one of her suite: '*Ne serait-il pas indiscret de leur redemander?*' which was tantamount to a command; so we played it again with increased *abandon*, and in the Finale gave ourselves up to a 'musical delirium'.

Chopin's enthusiasm throughout the whole performance of the piece must, I think, have kindled that of his hearers, who overwhelmed us both with compliments equally divided. Chopin played another solo as charmingly as before, and met with the same reception. . . . Chopin and I revelled like brothers in the triumph achieved by the individual talent of each, there was no tinge of jealousy on either side.

I wonder how true this was. Chopin hated Jews, and Moscheles was too steeped in tradition to admire Chopin as a composer. Later on in his letters we find the following gibe:

One may learn a great deal that is good by listening to Chopin's playing, but in his compositions Chopin shows that his best ideas are but isolated; he leaves them fragmentary, and fails to produce a work of complete unity. In his Sonata for Violoncello and Pianoforte [Op. 65] I often find passages which sound to me like someone preluding on the piano, the player knocking at the door of every key and clef to find if any melodious sounds are at home.

The King sent Chopin a gilded cup and saucer, and Moscheles a travelling-case 'to get rid of him as soon as possible' according to Chopin. It was to this Count Perthuis that Chopin gave the reasons why he had never written an opera, the Count having been deputed by Chopin's friends and compatriots to ask him to compose one: 'Ah! *Monsieur le Comte*, let me be a composer of music for the pianoforte. That is all I know how to do.'

On December 14 Chopin wrote the following letter to Breitkopf and Härtel in Leipzig:

Gentlemen! I have always had cause to be satisfied in my dealings with you; and feel that before severing our relations I

owe you a direct explanation. M. Probst, through whose intermediary my affairs with you have been conducted, has just told me that he has written to you about my last manuscripts, and that, having received no reply, he believes himself authorized to refuse me the price of 500 francs each. It is a price below which I would give up nothing. I have in my portfolio a long Sonata, a Scherzo, a Ballade, two Polonaises, four Mazurkas, two Nocturnes, an Impromptu. Be so kind, Gentlemen, as to reply by return courier how matters stand, in order that I may be able to come to a direct understanding with you.

We know from subsequent letters that this firm remained on amicable terms with Chopin throughout his life. With the exception of Opp. 13, 14, 19, 32, 43, 44, 45, 50, 51 and 59 they were the owners of the copyright outside France and England for all his compositions after Op. 11.

It was about the beginning of November 1839 that Chopin went to live at 16, Rue Pigalle, Madame Sand's establishment, and there he remained. George Sand produced a play, *Cosima*, on April 29, 1840, but it was a failure. Her financial position, none too strong of late, was now becoming serious. She could not afford to live at Nohant, and as Chopin appeared to be quite happy in Paris they decided to remain there all the summer. Fortunately, she was able to sign an agreement for a new and complete edition of her works which guaranteed her 12,000 francs a year over a number of years, but this was not until August 28 and now it was too late to rearrange their affairs. She writes on October 12 'Chopin gives five lessons every day and I write eight or ten pages every night'. Meanwhile, Chopin has arranged for the publication of his seven works from Op. 35 to Op. 41, and this time not with either Pleyel or Schlesinger. He instructs Fontana on April 23, 1840, not to bother any more, as Troupenas et Cie have bought the manuscripts. No price is mentioned, but he did not let the 'Jews' have them at their price after all. In the same letter he says that Liszt has arrived in Paris *en route* for London.

There is a mention in a letter to Madame Oury (*née* Emilie Belleville, whom Chopin had praised as a fine pianist in Warsaw in 1830) of a Waltz which he had the pleasure of writing for her. 'I beg you to keep it for yourself. I do not wish

it to be published.' I cannot find any record of this Waltz at all.

Old Papa Elsner had written to Chopin asking him if he could arrange for the publication of a new oratorio he had composed. Chopin replies on July 24 that it is too costly a proceeding in these days. 'The public is lucky if it sometimes gets the chance to hear a bit of Handel or Bach. Handel has only just begun to be appreciated last year, and even then only excerpts, not whole works.' He carefully explains the handicap under which all large works suffer, particularly those of living composers. He suggests 'that England will doubtless jump at your work. Perhaps, some day, in Birmingham, in the hall specially built for such things.'

In an appendix to Niecks' life of Chopin a short description is given by a pupil of the Master's health at this time. The pupil was Friederike Müller, who became Madame Streicher, and to whom was dedicated the *Allegro de Concert*, Op. 46.

Alas! he suffered greatly. Feeble, pale, coughing much, he often took opium drops on sugar and gum-water, rubbed his forehead with eau de Cologne, and nevertheless he taught with a patience, perseverance and zeal which were admirable. His lessons always lasted a full hour, generally he was so kind as to make them longer. . . . One morning he played from memory fourteen Preludes and Fugues of Bach's, and when I expressed my joyful admiration at this unparalleled performance, he replied: 'That can never be forgotten. For a year I have not practised a quarter-of-an-hour on end, I have not the strength, nor the energy; I wait always for a little health to take up all that again, but - I am still waiting.'

Mlle Müller had been staying in Paris for Chopin's return to begin her lessons with him. She had an interview with him at Rue Tronchet on October 30, 1839, before he went to live with George Sand at Rue Pigalle. As she kept her diary very carefully, this date is important. On April 20, 1840, Liszt gave an invitation *matinée* at Erard's. Chopin felt too ill to be present. He asked Mlle Müller for an account of it which she gave very

minutely. This was Chopin's answer to her admiration of Liszt's great achievements:

Then it seems that my opinion is right. The ultimate thing is simplicity. After having overcome all difficulties, after having played an immense quantity of notes, and still more notes, it is simplicity that emerges with all its charm, as the final seal upon art. Whoever hopes to attain this quickly will never achieve it; one cannot begin at the end. One must have studied much, even immensely, to reach this goal, and it is not easy. It was impossible for me to be at his *matinée*. With my health one can do nothing. I am always embroiled in my affairs, so that I have not a free moment. How I envy those who are strong, who have robust health, and who have nothing to do! I am very vexed. I have no time to be ill.

However delicate in body Chopin may have been in the period between June 1, 1839 and the end of 1841, there can be no question as to his mental power and the fertility of his inspiration. If one glances casually at the supreme list of works from Op. 35 to Op. 50 inclusive, all of which were published within those two and a half years, one can only be amazed at the achievement. Great works like the *F minor Ballade*, Op. 52, the *A flat Polonaise*, Op. 53; the *B minor Sonata*, Op. 58; the *Barcarolle*, Op. 60, and the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, Op. 61, not forgetting the smaller, but no less beautiful pieces in between, may have been written later, but they never excelled the productions of those fruitful years. Beginning with the *B flat minor Sonata*, Op. 35, we find such works as the *F major Ballade*, Op. 38, the *F sharp minor Polonaise*, Op. 44, the *A flat Ballade*, Op. 47, and the *F minor Fantaisie*, Op. 49, which are all to be reckoned among his most magnificent compositions. Remembering his extreme patience and microscopic attention to detail, one would consider that the twenty-four pieces which are included in the Opus numbers 35 to 50 were sufficient to satisfy the ambition of any composer; yet he taught regularly for several hours a day – he relied on this remuneration – and even began practising again for public concerts. His brain was in a wonderful state of stimulation and his capacity for work prodigious. No one with a saddened heart, a hopeless outlook,

could have achieved so much. His was a nature that never knew exhilaration, that thrived on imaginary worries; but during this period he must have had sufficient contentment to be able to concentrate upon his work and so think himself happy.

This mental activity may have been due to his long rest, or to the effect of his Majorcan impressions (though these must have appeared nightmares); or it may have been simply natural development. But has the reader not noticed the tremendous expansion of his mind since he came under the influence of George Sand and her friends? His melodies are purer, his rhythms more virile, his harmonies richer. Something has happened that has broadened every idea, made nobler every inspiration and given greater shape to every conception.

Chopin must often have looked back to that chance meeting with Prince Valentin Radziwill on a Paris street in 1832, and congratulated himself on his amazing luck. Had it not been for that meeting and the immediate impression his playing made on the guests at Madame de Rothschild's *soirée* he undoubtedly would have left Paris. Whither? To London perhaps, to New York, or back to Warsaw – at the time he was too downhearted to care. But none of these capitals would have developed his art as Paris did. Can we imagine the appreciation he would have received from intellectual London in the later Hanoverian days? Was there any intellect, any culture worth mentioning, any interest in music? He would probably have been torn to pieces first by Chorley and later by Davison, and would have been obliged to teach stupid *dilettanti* for a living; his art might even have degenerated to the level of Victorian taste, to please those who later adored the art of Davison's wife, Arabella Goddard, and the compositions of Sydney Smith. In New York he might have had a chance of building up a new school of technique and perhaps enriched himself as a pedagogue, but his creative art must have gone to the wall. To return to Warsaw would have meant the acceptance of defeat and the loss of his morale; the culture and refinement he had known there had disappeared, for most of the nobles and their families preferred exile to living under Russian rule. Berlin or Vienna he never considered. He felt intuitively that the Germanic peoples

would never understand the intimate poetry of his music, and his intuition has proved to be right.

That one stroke of good fortune decided his future for him; the hand of fate was for the first time kind.

Paris was the centre of world culture, a stimulating breeding-ground, the one city in Europe where brains and sensitive intelligence were rated above genealogical trees. It was the only possible centre for this richly-endowed musician; its centuries of culture were to develop his subtle and personal genius, which was far beyond ordinary teachings. This genius did not require lessons, nor the influence of contemporary music; it did not need instant recognition for encouragement; it needed only the natural broadening of the mind and widening of the outlook. One could conceive no better medium than the mingling with other sensitive natures, the intercourse with brother artists in a circle into which mundane and commercially-minded people had no entrée. The mind of a genius can re-act more quickly than that of ordinarily-endowed men; it is more easily penetrated, and has the added power of choosing and discarding. This gift of selection Chopin possessed, and so was generally surrounded by those men of quality who could be of most use to him. We know how he loved the society of elegant women. But was not this merely to pander to his vanity? His aristocratic manners, his liking for smart clothes and button-holes and gloves, and all the attributes of the fop, were fitting for a society favourite, and as such he expected flattery and attention. Often we find men of genius or of great intellect preferring the company of foolish and chattering butterflies, providing they are smart or pretty or well-born, to that of intelligent or highly-educated women; it is as if they find a mental relaxation in the ceaseless nonsense of these otherwise useless companions. I am sure that Chopin had a similar attitude. He was never a conceited man, but he thrived on inconsequential flattery.

Of all the men of distinction with whom he was on an everyday footing the most stimulating and beneficial was Delacroix. This fine painter was not only the leader of the young Romantics in art, but had an analytical and probing mind that was perpetually at the service of his musician friend.

The painter's discussions on art, on its lines, shapes, colours and subjects, were of inestimable importance in moulding and perfecting the young musician's vision. In each successive work we find Chopin growing more sure, more determined, more experimental. We shall find nearly every composition conceived on a grander scale, expressing deeper emotion, building up finer climaxes, demanding still greater extremes of tone-colour. Rarely shall we come across a virtuoso passage, a flourish of dazzle. Those days of brilliance have gone, and in their place has come a nobler line, and a harmonic richness of sound that is at times even startling. Much of this expansion was due to Delacroix. Not only was he a great technician, but he had the faculty of imparting his knowledge to others. When we recall the fact that Chopin derived little pleasure from pictures in general, and never had any admiration for the paintings of Delacroix, it strikes us all the more forcibly that he should have listened so attentively to the counsel of his friend.

Although Chopin was influenced by his contact with so many illustrious people, we must not be under the impression that the contemporary music of France had any effect upon him. His music was more original than that of any other composer, and what he heard neither affected his inspiration nor altered his style. France, on the other hand, has been influenced ever since by the music of Chopin, and helped by that influence has built up a national idiom entirely distinct from that of all other nations.

Most certainly George Sand deserves some of the credit for Chopin's enlargement and growth. Whether her love or her '*affection maternelle*' was the cause we do not know; but her influence on his intellect is obvious. After all the heart and the mind can work together! At her house Chopin could meet most of the intellectuals of Paris, which meant most of the cultured brains of Europe at that time. When dinner was over and his work was finished, and before George Sand began hers, it was the custom for the two friends to talk and discuss their daily affairs. Perhaps Chopin would play to her, for if a pianoforte was in the room he could not keep his hands off it. Almost as customary was it for their friends to come in and join them. George Sand had her literary friends like Heine, Balzac (though



*[Collection Alfred Cortot]*

**CHOPIN BY AN UNKNOWN PAINTER**



he was generally too occupied), Lamennais, Leroux, Sainte-Beuve; musicians like Meyerbeer, Alkan, Dessauer, Franck, Pauline Viardot. Chopin would bring in his regiment of Poles – Niemcewicz, Mickiewicz, Nowakowski, Slowacki, Krasinski, Kwiatkowski, Grzymala, Fontana. There would be some of his more favoured pupils, Gutmann for instance, and the hosts of Parisian society – princes and princesses, counts and countesses, barons and baronesses and untitled folk – all of them, like the society of every capital city, only too glad of the opportunity of living on the fringe of intellectuality, only too anxious to become acquainted with and lionize the leaders of art and culture. Was it at one of these *soirées* on January 7, 1841, that Heine said in speaking of Alfred de Musset: 'C'est un jeune homme de beaucoup de passé'? These evenings must have enriched Chopin's vision, must have augmented his interests. Though he is only thirty-one he is at the zenith of his mental activities. He is master of his thoughts and has become the master of his equipment. We have seen the expansion coming; now it has arrived. Now we recognize that he who we imagined would be trodden under, whose soul might have been destroyed and his ambitions frustrated by the force of George Sand's domineering personality, is rising beyond our dreams. His work can no longer be considered merely as promising, or talented, or inspired, or even great – it is now monumental, masterful, magnificent. It was always original, therefore personal; from this it has grown to heights unbelievable. We can now measure him with the truly great – we shall find that in his sphere he is unsurpassed.

## CHAPTER XIX

### TROUBLES WITH PUBLISHERS

1841-1842

ON April 26, 1841, Chopin gave a concert in the Salle Pleyel, assisted by a singer, Madame Damoreau-Cinti, and a violinist, H. W. Ernst. It was really a private affair, with tickets at 15 and 20 francs, and a public entirely composed of pupils and their friends. Being private, it was fashionable; the hall was full and the audience enthusiastic. Amongst other things Chopin played some of his latest pieces: the *F major Ballade*, the *C sharp minor Scherzo*, the *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 41, and the *A major Polonaise*.

Liszt has made the concert memorable by an account he wrote for the *Gazette musicale* of May 2. Ernest Legouvé had been sent to criticize, but Liszt begged to be allowed the honour of writing about his friend. There is a pretty story about this. When Legouvé told Chopin of Liszt's intention, Chopin answered 'I should have preferred it to have been you'. 'But you must not think that, my dear friend. An article by Liszt would be a piece of good luck for the public and for you. Have trust in his admiration for your talent. I promise you that he will make a fine kingdom for you.' 'Yes, in his empire,' said Chopin, smiling.

Here are some excerpts from Liszt's long article:

Last Monday, at eight in the evening, the salons of M. Pleyel were magnificently lighted; to the foot of a staircase, which was carpeted and perfumed with flowers, a stream of carriages brought the most elegant women, the most fashionable young men, the most famous artists, the richest financiers, the most illustrious noblemen, the whole élite of society, a whole aristocracy of birth, fortune, talent and beauty.

A grand pianoforte was open on the platform; everyone pressed round, sought the nearest places; already they listened, collecting themselves, saying that they would not lose a chord, a note, an intention, a thought of him who was going to sit

there. And they were right to be so avid, attentive, and deeply affected, because he for whom they waited, whom they wished to see, hear, admire, applaud, was not only a clever virtuoso, a pianist expert in the art of playing notes; he was not merely an artist of great renown, he was all that and more, he was Chopin.

Liszt then goes on to speak of Chopin's life in Paris for the last ten years, of his rare public appearances which 'ensured him a reputation unaffected by the caprices of fashion, which sheltered him from rivalries, jealousies and injustice'. Further on he speaks of the programme:

For Monday's concert Chopin chose those of his works which are least classical in form. He played no concerto, sonata, fantasia, variations, but preludes, studies, nocturnes and mazurkas. . . . From the first chord, a close contact was established between him and his audience. Two studies and a ballade were encored, and had it not been for the fear of adding to the already great fatigue which was betrayed by his pale face he would have been asked to repeat one by one all the pieces on the programme.

A further criticism has survived, that from *France musicale*, also of May 2. The writer compares Chopin with Schubert:

One has done for the pianoforte what the other has done for the voice. . . . Chopin is a pianist of conviction. He composes for himself, plays for himself . . . and everyone listens with interest, with delight, with infinite pleasure. Listen how he dreams, how he weeps, with what sweetness, tenderness and melancholy he sings, how perfectly he expresses the gentlest and loftiest feelings. Chopin is the pianist of sentiment *par excellence*. One can say that he is the creator of a school of playing and of a school of composition. Nothing, in truth, equals the lightness and sweetness of his preluding on the pianoforte, nothing can be found to compare with his works in originality, distinction and grace. Chopin is a pianist apart, who should not be and cannot be compared with anyone.

This is indeed high praise, and, what is more, discerning. Chopin did create a new technique of pianoforte writing, and

with it a new style of playing. It is rare to find a contemporary critic so courageous and so right in his diagnosis. Chopin was delighted with his success, and immediately began to prepare for a second concert.

Amongst the many famous men who forgathered at 16, Rue Pigalle, none admired the art of Chopin more than Eugène Delacroix, the great painter, whose paternity has been attributed to Talleyrand. Chopin did not care for painting at all, and was no judge; very tactlessly he would praise the art of Ingres in preference to that of Delacroix. Jean Dominique Auguste Ingres (1781-1867) had returned in 1841 from Rome, where he had been Director of the French Academy. His reputation had been under a cloud for some time, but with his return came a fresh popularity and the bestowal of the highest honours. The two painters were artistic enemies, the younger being too immersed in romanticism to see eye to eye with the upholder of the stern classic school of the Revolution. The name of Ingres to the impassioned Delacroix was anathema. He could not bear his lack of line, and would say that Ingres was half man, half imbecile.

Like Chopin, Delacroix was a consumptive, and the two had many traits in common. He was as much of a dandy as the Pole, almost as sensitive, shy and modest, a mystic and a sceptic. Both of them hated crowds and abhorred false flattery. They lived on their emotions and knew what they liked; but whereas Chopin only really cared for music, Delacroix was interested in other arts than his own. Apart from the fact that he loved the music of Chopin, the composer's chief attraction for him was the modern spirit and romanticism of his creations. George Sand in comparing her two friends wrote:

Chopin and Delacroix love each other dearly. They have many affinities of character and the same great qualities of heart and of intellect. But, as regards art, Delacroix understands and adores Chopin, Chopin does not understand Delacroix. He esteems, cherishes and respects the man; he detests the painter. Delacroix, more varied in his faculties, appreciates music, knows and understands it; his taste is unerring and exquisite. He never gets tired of listening to Chopin; he delights in his music, he knows it by heart. Chopin accepts this adora-

tion and is touched by it; but when he looks at a picture by his friend, he is pained and cannot find a word to say. He is a musician and nothing but a musician. His thoughts can be translated only into music. He has great intelligence and delicacy, but understands nothing of painting or sculpture.

The two artists remained great friends. In his letters Delacroix invariably writes with the deepest affection of Chopin – ‘He is a man of very rare distinction; the truest artist I have ever known’. He would refer to his ‘incomparable genius’. And that Chopin did appreciate Delacroix is shown in a letter to Franchomme on August 30, 1845. ‘Delacroix . . . is the most admirable artist that one could meet. I have passed many delightful hours with him. He adores Mozart and knows all his operas by heart.’

It is strange to think that Chopin was so little in sympathy with the sister arts that he showed such a lack of interest and had so little sense of criticism. One would have thought that a sensitive and refined nature such as his, living on imagination and inspiration, would have responded to the beauty of colour, shape and line, would have found it indispensable to his own art and helpful in the shaping and perfecting of his own ideas. Perhaps it was his dislike for colour that was responsible for his antipathy to every form of programme music. In the many discussions and arguments *chez* Madame Sand, Chopin was always absolutely clear in his mind about disliking descriptive music. He failed to understand why nature in any form, or any definite object, should be musically depicted. The symphonic poem, which did not then exist, would never have appealed to him, and we can imagine how the orchestral Liszt and Tchaikowski would have disturbed him. The *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz, the forerunner of modern programme music, was nauseating to him; but so it was to almost everyone during the life of its composer, and so it is still to many present-day listeners. The richness of his own musical palette was sufficient for Chopin, and he refused to be convinced that any composer should have to seek aid from outside sources for his effects; this, to him, showed a lack of true inspiration and a too great reliance on technical invention.

Apart from his lessons, nothing of interest happened during

the following few months in Paris. Early in June the whole Sand *ménage*, with their boarder, migrated to Nohant. Having missed the previous summer there, they were excitedly looking forward to the visit. George Sand was not feeling so poor, for not only was she in receipt of extra money from the new publishing contract, but her half-brother Hippolyte had been able to show a working profit on the estate budget. There were many guests coming and going, but of all the visitors one stood out – Pauline Viardot-Garcia.

This great singer, who had married the impresario, Louis Viardot, the previous year, was a daughter of the fine Spanish tenor, Manuel Garcia, and sister of Malibran and of the Manuel Garcia who became so famous as a teacher of singing in London at the end of last century. She was one of the greatest singers of all time. When young she took pianoforte lessons from Liszt, and studied composition with Reicha, becoming very proficient in both branches. She was also a fine actress. With all these gifts, besides a voice with a compass of more than three octaves, it is no wonder that her name has lived. Many of her compositions were published and one often reads of her organ and pianoforte recitals, usually in the cause of charity. She arranged some of Chopin's mazurkas as songs, and it is said of her that she used to sing as a *vocalise* his *Étude in A flat*, Op. 25, No. 1.

In the evening the two musicians would pass several hours at the pianoforte, reading through the scores of the great composers of the past, Bach and Mozart in particular. Chopin preferred Mozart's music to that of all others, especially 'Don Giovanni', whilst for Bach he had the greatest reverence; he always prepared for his concerts by playing the Preludes and Fugues. These evenings were unforgettable. Chopin could not share in the hunting and shooting expeditions of the other guests, or join them in their long walks, nor did he appear to appreciate the noise of the billiard room. As George Sand has said – 'Chopin always longed for Nohant, but once he got there he wanted to get away again'. He liked its solitude and peacefulness, but the moment guests arrived he would curl up like a hedgehog, becoming cynical and petulant in turn. All the more did he enjoy these hours of music-making with a sympathetic and intelligent companion.

In the Opienski collection of Chopin's letters there are twenty-two addressed to Fontana in 1841. Niecks only knew of nine, and Ganche, who has successfully followed Niecks in almost every particular, has the same nine translated. Niecks is fully justified in saying that Karasowski's dates for these letters are wrong. The years 1838 and 1839 are given by Karasowski, but these are out of the question if we examine the contents of the letters carefully. The new firm of publishers, Troupenas, is first mentioned by Chopin to Fontana on April 23, 1840. Fontana had no hand in arranging the publication of the seven new works with this firm, and possibly was surprised at Chopin's new move. We know that most of these seven new Opp. from Op. 35 to Op. 41, were not finished until some time after his return from Majorca, chiefly during 1840. The *Tarantelle*, Op. 43, was definitely finished in the early summer of 1841, and was paid for by Troupenas in July of that year. Chopin even asks Fontana to be sure to label it with the right opus number, to follow the *A flat Waltz* which had been published the previous July by Pacini. Another proof of Karasowski's blunder is that Chopin never once mentions Majorca in all these letters, which, had they belonged to either 1838 or 1839, would have been his chief topic apart from his harangues against Jew publishers.

It would be too much to expect readers of a biography to plough through all these interesting Fontana letters, but a few excerpts will enlighten us about Chopin's work and his habits. It is impossible to arrange them in their proper order, for the majority are undated, but I shall quote them in the order given by Opienski, for he has evidently devoted much thought to their classification. On July 2, Chopin is concerned with the mid-winter weather, but remarks that St. Médard ends the next day and is hopeful. On July 23, he wants Fontana to go to Pleyel and ask him to send a better pianoforte,

for mine is not good. . . . I doubt his refusing or delaying. But if he should, don't hit him.

The next one is undated:

I send you 100 francs for various expenses. First of all, repay yourself for the charivari; pay the hire, the house porter, the

flower woman, who claims for six [bunches?]. Buy me some *bon soin* soap at *Houbigand Chardin's*, 2 pairs of Swedish gloves (you'll find an old pair in the drawer for a measure), a bottle of *patchouli*, a bottle of *bouquet de Chantilly*.

He then describes a certain shop which has

two windows with various little boxes, ornaments and trifles; shining, elegant and expensive. Ask there whether they have one of those tiny ivory hands, for scratching your head. You must have seen such a toy more than once; a little hand, usually with bent fingers, white, set on a black rod. So find such a toy and send it to me, if it is not more than, for instance, 10, 15, 20 or even 30 [francs]. . . . In the drawer you will find, at the top, a flat metal flask, sewn up in flannel, to put on the stomach with hot water, also the air cushion. . . .

Chopin only alludes to musical matters in two short sentences: 'Make Pleyel give you a copy of my Preludes, and take all my *Études* from Schlesinger. . . . Send without fail Cherubini's *traité* [the Treatise on Counterpoint and Fugue].

Fontana was treated little better than a messenger boy, but he faithfully carried out his master's orders. We see the fop emerging in the first part of the letter, then the patient. It is interesting to see Chopin desiring to study the art of polyphony, but it would be more so to know how much of it he devoured.

The next letter, undated, is mainly occupied with advice about the new *Tarantelle*.

I send you the tarantella. Be kind and copy it; but first go to Schlesinger, or to Troupenas, and look at the *Recueil* of Rossini's songs, or rather songs edited by him, in which there is a tarantella (in *la*); I don't know whether it is written in 6/8 or in 12/8. People write both ways; but I should like it to be the way Rossini has it. . . . I also beg you, instead of repetition signs, write it all out. . . . And if my manuscript is not metrically right, don't give it to him, but copy it out again. It's a bore for you to copy the beastly thing, but I do hope that it will be a long time before I write anything worse. So, please, look at the number of the *last work*; that is, the number of the last

mazurkas, or perhaps the *waltz*, that Pacini brought out, and give the tarantella the next number.

He then asks his valet-friend to buy him a *blouse en toile ciré* for 14 francs, and a *blouse de chasse fermé par devant, forme de chemise* [a hunting blouse fastening in front like a shirt], adding that he bought one a week before – ‘small mother-of-pearl buttons, well-made, two breast-pockets etc.’.

The letter following is also undated. Its chief purpose is instruction about the delivery of a Pleyel pianoforte to Nohant, which must be sent express, not freight, so that it can arrive in four days from Paris.

If Pleyel does not please you and you think Erard would be better, change; but don't do it lightly; satisfy yourself first that Erard will really be more obliging. I don't see why you should be tied to Pleyel if the other is more serviceable.

In the succeeding letter dated August 11, Chopin says that the pianoforte arrived on the 9th. Later in the letter he refers to his physique.

I am now becoming as meek as a baby in swaddling-clothes; and if somebody wanted to hold me in leading strings I should be quite pleased; N.B.: with a well wadded cap on my noddle, because – I feel it – I should stumble and fall over every minute. Unfortunately what awaits me seems to be not leading strings but a staff, or crutches, if I reach old age at my present pace.

Chopin wrote a short note to Camille Pleyel thanking him for the pianoforte:

The instrument arrived in good tune, almost in chamber-concert tune. But I have not yet played on it much, as the weather is so fine that I am out of doors nearly all the time.

In another undated letter to Fontana, very short, Chopin speaks of the final dismissal of his man-servant, at which he had hinted in the previous letter, and entreats his friend not to take him ‘for any money, for he will cost you more than he is

worth'. This is succeeded by a longer letter, dated August 16, mostly about business questions:

Don't give the manuscript to Troupenas till Schubert [another publisher, Schuberth] writes the date of publication. No doubt there will soon be an answer through Leo. It's a pity that the Tarantella went to Berlin; for, as you saw from Schubert's letter, Liszt is involved in these money affairs, and I may have unpleasantness about it. He is a touchy Hungarian and ready to think – as I said the manuscript was not to be given up without the money – ready to think that I don't trust him, or something of that sort. I don't know just what, but I have a presentiment that we shall have a pie [row].

Further on he lets out that the pianoforte Pleyel has sent is 'a very bad one'.

The following letter contains one passage of importance, for we shall see that Mlle de Rozières later became a trusted confidante. Chopin asks Fontana not to give any details about his whereabouts to the Czech composer Joseph Dessauer, or to Anton Wodzinski,

because he [Anton] will tell Mlle de Rozières, and she starts gossip and tales about everything, that even come round to me here in the queerest way. – You know how easily things grow out of nothing, when they pass through a mouth that smears them all over and makes something else out of them – I don't want to say much; but some of the most innocent things that I have written to you have come *de retro* to me that way.

August 25 is the date of the next letter. Chopin thanks his friend for various commissions accomplished. He talks about 'a new manuscript (a kind of polonaise, but it's more a fantasia)'. [Most probably the *F sharp minor Polonaise*, Op. 44.] He then asks Fontana to procure him some Tokay. 'I will send you the money, and instructions, how to send the wine to Marseilles' – possibly it was a present to his doctor there. He was extremely upset with Fontana for giving a small bust of him by Dantan to Anton Wodzinski to take back to Poland. Chopin does not mind Anton having it, but 'it will seem so strange to my parents, that not they should be the first to have this plaster. . . . In

Anton's home I hold another place than that of pianist. Certain persons will see it differently.' Chopin is afraid that Anton will tell Mlle de Rozières, who is his mistress,

for he is well-meaning, but weak! And she is loose-tongued and loves to display her *intimité* with him and to pry into other people's affairs. . . . She is (between ourselves) an insufferable pig, who has dug her way in some queer fashion into my private garden, and is rooting about for truffles among the roses. She is a person to keep away from. Whatever she touches feels her incredible indiscretion.

Following this is a short note, undated, in which Fontana is thanked for arranging about the wine – 'but 200 bottles are too much for me'. This is followed by a long letter dated September 13.

Hasslinger is a scoundrel. He wants to print, or rather he has printed, and wants to publish, the things that I gave him for nothing in Vienna 12 years ago. What do you think of that? I shall not answer him, unless I write a *sharp* letter. [These were the Opp. 2 and 4, and the Variations on a German air.]

Chopin then becomes irritated over an account written by Liszt of a benefit concert for the Cologne cathedral:

And 15,000 persons counted, and the president, and the vice-president, and the secretary of the philharmonic society, and that carriage, and that harbour, and that steamboat! He will live to be a deputy or perhaps even a king, in Abyssinia or on the Congo; but as for the themes of his compositions, they will repose in the newspapers.

Anton has been ill in Poland, and Mlle de Rozières has written 'an emotional, frantic letter' to the Lady of the House [George Sand] saying that she intends to defy conventions – 'for his family are worthless, savage barbarians' – and is going to him. This angers Chopin.

I recommended this broomstick to Madame Sand as a piano-forte teacher for her daughter. She has wormed her way in, representing herself as the *victim* of her love; and *knowing my past*

*affairs* through Polonia [Anton], which she has seen in various situations, she is forcing herself into the *intimité* of Madame Sand. . . . Anton does not care for her . . . but she makes use of him to defend herself, and, *par ricochet*, of me too (which matters less); and, worst of all, of Madame Sand.

Fontana is then asked to buy a Strasbourg pie, 'for I have lost a bet', and then is asked for a description of a new apartment. 'Does one have to enter near the stable? Does one have to get tired going in? Is the place on the street? Is it high? Does it smoke? Is it dark?' Chopin has been contemplating a new abode, not caring much for the *pavillon* of the house at 16, Rue Pigalle. He does not move, however, until the following autumn.

On September 15 is another short note, written at three in the morning, followed by yet another, undated, the only interest of which is that Wessel (the English publisher) is called a rogue, for having published either the *Impromptu in F sharp* or the *Waltz in A flat*, Op. 42 – Chopin was not sure which – with the title of '*Agréments au Salon*'. – 'I will never send him anything more'.

The next letter was probably written on Sunday, September 19, although it is only marked Sunday, and is entirely taken up with financial negotiations.

What you have done is done well. It's a wonderful world! Masset is a scoundrel, and Pelletan another. Masset knew about the Pacini Waltz, and that I had promised it to the Gazette. . . . If he won't accept for 600, with London (his price for my *ordinary* manuscript was 300), 3 times 5 = 15. But to give so much work for 1,500 francs is impossible. Especially as I told him the things may turn out so that I cannot give them for that price. For instance, he could not demand that I should sell him, say, 12 *Études*, or *une Méthode de piano* for 300 francs. The same with the Allegro maestoso [Op. 46] which I send you to-day; I can't give it for 300 francs, only for 600. For the Fantasia [Op. 49] 500. I will let him have the Nocturnes [Op. 48], the Ballade [Op. 47], and the Polonaise [Op. 44] at 300, like those which he printed before. That is: for Paris, these things for 2,000. If he does not care to have them (*entre nous*) I shall be glad, because Schlesinger will be delighted to buy them; but I do not wish him to regard me as a person who does not keep his promises.

*Il n'y avait qu'une convention tacite d'honnête homme à honnête homme;* [there was only a tacit understanding between one honest man and another] so he need not complain of my terms, which are very moderate, especially as it is long since I have published anything. All I want is to get out of this position with decency. I know that I am not selling myself. But tell him, if I wished to take advantage of him or to cheat him, I could write 15 bad things in a year, which he would buy at 300, and I should have *a larger income*. Would that be more honest? My dear, tell him that I don't write often, and publish little; don't let him think that I am raising my prices; but when you see the blots on my manuscript you will see, yourself, that I have a right to ask 600, when he gave me 300 for the Tarantella (for the Bolero 500).

I beg you, for God's sake, respect my manuscript; don't crush me, or smear me with pitch, or tear me to pieces (all things of which you are incapable; but I write it because I do so love my laborious writings). Make a copy. *Yours* can remain in Paris. To-morrow you shall have the Nocturnes, and by the end of the week the Ballade and Fantasia; I can't polish them enough. If it bores you to copy them, do it *for the remission of your great sins*, for I don't want to give this spider's web to any hack copyist. Once more I rely on you; for if I had to write out those 18 pages once more, I should go mad. But don't crumple them!!!

After a few words to finish off the letter, he adds a postscript the following morning.

I have just re-read your letter – I see that he asks about just Paris. So *settle* the question as best you can, but *press* him for 3,000 *pour les 2 pays* (or 2,000 for Paris alone), if he himself should lay stress on that; because *la condition des 2 pays* is easier for him and more advantageous for me: if he does not consent, it may perhaps be in order to have a *pretext for breaking* with me. So we will await his answer from London. Write always openly, and be always very courteous with him, my Dear; be *cold*, but not to me.

This important letter has been quoted almost verbatim. It shows to us how keen Chopin was to get his price. Once he had made up his mind about the value of his manuscripts he rarely deviated from it. Masset is *Troupenas & Cie.*, and evidently he

was not willing to pay the price, for after the *Tarantelle* he published nothing further. Schlesinger, on the other hand, must have come to terms with Chopin, for he became the owner of the French copyright of all the works up to Op. 56. In this letter we at least find Chopin trying to abide by his word and act like an honest man. Presumably he had promised Troupenas & Cie. more manuscripts, but had not expected them to cut down his price. They had only issued his other works the previous year, and could not have expected to see a profit yet; so that this attitude came rather hard on the impoverished composer. Although at times we have not seen eye to eye with Chopin over his financial transactions, on this occasion he deserves our sympathy.

On Thursday, September 30, he returned to Nohant after a few days visit to Paris, and the next day again wrote to Fontana. 'Yesterday, Thursday, I came here. I have done the C sharp minor Prelude [Op. 45] for *Schlesinger*; it is short, as he wished.' Chopin then recommends the Prelude to the Viennese Mechetti, who wants a short piece for an album.

It is well modulated and I can send it without anxiety. Let him give me 300 for it (that's right?), and into the bargain let him have the Mazurka, but not print it in the album.

If Troupenas, that is, Masset, should make any difficulties, don't come down a farthing; tell him that perhaps he would prefer not to print everything (he won't want that; I could sell them higher to someone else). Tell him that the 600 includes London, and that these manuscripts are far more important than those former ones.

The next letter is only marked Nohant, October 1841. In it Chopin informs Fontana that he has copied out the Prelude and is sending it to him and also asks him not to forget to add the *opus* to the Polonaise [Op. 44] and the number to the Prelude. He cannot remember how to spell Princess Czernicheff, to whom Op. 45 is dedicated. This is followed on October 7 by a letter mainly occupied with the coming removal. 'As it is decided that I am going to live in one of the *pavillons*, I shall need the bed. Household stuff, music, anything you come across, you can have sent to the Rue Pigalle.'

The letter of October 10 is more interesting. Chopin calls Wessel a windbag and a cheat.

Write him what you like; but say that I have *no intention of giving up* my rights over the Tarantella. As he did not *return* it in time – and if he has lost on any compositions, it is doubtless because of the *silly titles* which he has given them without my consent and in spite of the strong objection several times expressed by Mr. Stapleton; and if I were to listen to my feelings, I would never send him anything more after those *titles*. . . . Madame Sand's son will be in Paris on the 16th; I will send you by him the manuscript of the Concerto [Op. 46] and Nocturnes.

Stapleton was the partner of Wessel from 1839–1845. The titles given by this English firm must have been exasperating to the composer, though quite in keeping with the usual business acumen of English publishers. Here are some of their fantastic inventions: – Op. 1, *Adieu à Varsovie*: Op. 2, *Hommage à Mozart*: Op. 3, *La Gaité*: Op. 5, *La Posiana*: Op. 9, *Murmures de la Seine*: Op. 15, *Les Zéphirs*: Op. 18, *Invitation à la Valse*: Op. 19, *Souvenir d'Andalousie*: Op. 20, *Le Banquet infernal*: Op. 23, *Ballade ohne Worte*: Op. 27, *Les Plaintives*: Op. 31, *La Méditation*: Op. 32, *Il Lamento e la Consolazione*: Op. 37, *Les Soupirs*: Op. 40, *Les Favorites*. Mazurkas were usually labelled *Souvenir de la Pologne*. These degrading titles were conceived as bait for window-dressing. Chopin's reactions to them must have been pleasant to hear.

On October 28 he writes: 'We are coming without fail on *Monday*, that is, the 2nd, at 2 in the afternoon, or perhaps at 5 or 6, in case of anything unexpected'. He asks Fontana to be there and to see 'that fires are made in the fireplaces and stove, for two or three days'.

Don't hurry with the manuscripts; I would rather people should wait for them in Leipsic, than that it should be *cold*, or dusty, or smelly, or damp in the Rue Pigalle when we arrive. . . . Your old bald head can meet my decrepit and mouldy nose, and we'll sing together.

The last letter to Fontana from Nohant this year is marked 'Beginning of November'. 'My departure from here is delayed,

so perhaps I can't reach Paris till the 6th or 8th.' Chopin sent two Nocturnes [Op. 48] and said in a postscript 'Perhaps some sharps and flats may be missing'. He definitely tells Fontana to inform Masset that he cannot come to '*any terms*' with him, that he is '*forced* to apply to others'.

Thus ends the long series of Chopin-Fontana correspondence of 1841, which throws much additional light on the composer's dealings with his various publishers. Towards the end the letters have grown happier. Chopin may have been feeling stronger in health, but I think the main cause was his looking forward to Paris once again. Curious as it may seem, he was much happier there than in the country. He liked seeing people; he felt he belonged to the world; the sense of movement exhilarated him. There are many proofs of this. George Sand, in particular, often writes to her friends of this fact in her letters, and in the *Histoire de ma Vie* repeats it once more when explaining their reasons for moving into the Square d'Orléans in 1842. 'He rejoices also in having an isolated room where he can either compose or dream. But he liked the world, and had scarcely any profit from his sanctuary where he gave his lessons. It was not there, but at Nohant, that he created and wrote.' Chopin was fully aware of this inability to write in Paris, and doubtless liked going to Nohant chiefly for that reason. In a letter to his family on October 1, 1845, he said, 'I will, however, finish several manuscripts before leaving this place, for it is impossible for me to compose in the winter'.

Immediately he arrived at 16, Rue Pigalle, Chopin resumed his lessons. Ever since his successful concert at the end of April he had looked forward to a second. He had enjoyed playing in public again after so many years, and wished for a repetition. For February 21, 1842, again at the Salle Pleyel, he announced a *soirée musicale*, this time with the assistance of Pauline Viardot-Garcia and Auguste Franchomme. The singer sang three times – an air by Dessauer, some Handel fragments, and 'Le Chêne et le Roseau', in which she was accompanied by Chopin. No details have been preserved of what the 'cellist played on his one appearance. Chopin played a number of pieces, chosen so as not to tax his strength. He included three *Mazurkas*, *A flat*, *B major* and *A minor*; the *A flat Ballade*; three *Études* from Op. 25,

*A flat*, *F minor* and *C minor*; four *Nocturnes*, one of which was the *F sharp minor*, Op. 48, No. 2; the *Prelude in D flat*; and the *Impromptu in G flat*, Op. 51. Most of these were purely salon pieces, and, unlike the items in the previous concert, were not chosen entirely from his latest compositions.

Of Chopin's appearance at this time we have the following description from Georges Mathias, who was his pupil from 1839-1843, and was later a professor at the Conservatoire de Paris: 'Slender, elegant, always well turned out, with his frock-coat buttoned up to his neck, and usually made of fine cloth, mauve, blue or beige. He had small, narrow feet, which were always well shod in patent-leather shoes that shone like mirrors. His fingers were long, his hands thin and well looked after. One could say that he was a gentleman to his finger-tips, aristocratic both as man and as musician. He was fond of beautiful and distinguished women, and when, at a *soirée*, he was asked to play, he liked to be surrounded by them. It was then that he put everything into his playing - poetry, passion and exaltation. In this atmosphere of sympathy and affection his soul responded with all its intensity of chivalry, heroism, pride, tenderness and sorrow.'

Despite his eighteen years' residence in France Chopin never mastered the French language. As a boy he had been thoroughly grounded in German, which he never forgot; but although he spoke French fluently, he had a decided foreign accent, and never gained any facility in writing it. For this reason he dreaded letter-writing - it is said that he would sooner walk across Paris to deliver a message or answer an invitation than write - though we also discover many instances in his family letters, which were written in Polish, where he admits having begun the letter many times. Even as late as June 30, 1848, he begs Solange Clésinger to 'pardon my style. *Le style, c'est l'homme*. My style is truly stupid.'

## CHAPTER XX

### FAILING HEALTH

1842-1845

FROM a letter written to Grzymala, probably during March 1842, it would seem that Chopin's health was suffering from the rigours of the Parisian winter. '*I must stay in bed all day*, I have so much pain in my beastly face and glands.' He also tells his friend that 'Jasio [Matuszynski] is in bed himself and had blood-letting to-day'. Although Chopin often longed for society, especially the company of charming and cultivated women, he was happiest in his solitude. This love for isolation, for being alone with his best friend – his pianoforte – was excellent for his muse. Inspirations would come to him with his improvising, he would forget his malady, and would cease to worry over mundane things; but his body received no encouragement. He coddled himself as his mother and sisters had advised in his teens, and lived an almost hibernating existence in hermetically sealed rooms; such treatment was stifling his physique, was ruining any possible chance of ultimate recovery. With his devastating disease and the extraordinary cotton-wool life he led it is amazing that he lived as long as he did. The death of Matuszynski from tuberculosis on April 20 was a terrible shock to him, more particularly as the end came with alarming suddenness. It made him ponder and think, wondering whether his own life would be ended just as precipitately, before he had time to fulfil his ambitions, before the source of his inspiration had been extinguished. He knew that his ideas were as fertile as ever. The remainder of the spring in Paris was an anxious and depressing period.

Very early in the summer Chopin reappeared at Nohant. Little of interest can have happened, as there are no letters of consequence, and certainly none relating to either the conception or the selling of his works. He and George Sand came back earlier than usual to Paris, if we can rely on his letter to Grzymala on July 28, in which he says, 'To-morrow night we go to Paris to look for lodgings'.

The new establishment was in the Square d'Orléans, Madame Sand occupying No. 5 and Chopin No. 9. Madame Marliani already lived there, and had proposed that the three friends should lead a form of communal life; her house was No. 7, between the writer and the musician. There was a large, clean courtyard, planted and gravelled, across which it was easy for each to visit the others. They dined *chez* Madame Marliani, and, when Chopin felt inclined, would go back to his rooms and devour his music. The life was attractive to all three; economically it had its appeal, and because of the intimacy of their friendship, it was both easy and advantageous for entertaining their large circle of friends. Once again, Chopin looked forward to peace and work.

On October 16, 1842, Chopin had a letter from his father in which the following passage is of interest: 'We have seen with pleasure from your last letter that the country air has strengthened your health and that you hope to spend a good winter; also, that you have changed your lodging because the previous one was too cold. But will you not be lonely, if *other persons* do not move also? You have not mentioned this. . . .' Chopin could not have spoken much of George Sand in his family correspondence. In a letter on March 21 his sister Louise comments: 'It is really unbelievable that in Paris anyone should not know how many daughters George S. has. Why, then, be astonished if surprising things are written in Warsaw? There are now amongst us a great many romancers of both sexes; one writes, one reads, one chatters enormously.'

We know that Frédéric was most apprehensive about the reaction of his family towards his *liaison* with George Sand, and it is more than probable that hitherto he had told them very little. It is also possible that Anton Wodzinski, who had not of late years proved a true friend, had not been over-careful with his news of their beloved one, and was responsible for the many romances and stories that were circulating round Warsaw. He married beneath him – a bitter blow to his proud parents. As Louise remarks on October 16: 'The marriage of Anton was a punishment for all the faults committed.' This refers to the faults of the parents, for, after the rupture between Frédéric and Marie Wodzinska, their attitude towards the Chopin family

became almost unaccountably cordial. Perhaps they regretted their previous haughtiness. Marie had since married, and her unhappiness in her marriage had made them realize the damage that had been done.

During this autumn at the Square d'Orléans, Wilhelm von Lenz made Chopin's acquaintance. Lenz was a Russian pianist from St. Petersburg, born in 1808, who subsequently made a stir with the publication of two works on Beethoven, *Beethoven and his three styles* and *Beethoven – an Art-study*. He also wrote another book, *The great pianoforte virtuosos of our time*, and was anxious to know Chopin in order to include him in it. Liszt had told this intrepid scalp-hunter that Chopin was extremely difficult to approach, that to very few was granted the privilege of having lessons from him. To facilitate the meeting Liszt wrote on a card, 'Laissez passer; Franz Liszt', at the same time telling Lenz to announce himself at a particular hour when Chopin was always at home. 'Perhaps Chopin will take you, but do not ask to be presented to Madame Sand. He is suspicious.' 'He has not your courage,' answered Lenz – 'No, that he has not, the poor Frédéric.'

Chopin received Lenz coldly, and did not offer a chair, for he suspected that Liszt was using him to spy on his methods of teaching; but on hearing his visitor play he consented to give him lessons. 'What do you read?' asked Chopin. 'I prefer George Sand and Rousseau to all the others.' Chopin smiled, 'he looked beautiful at this moment,' adds Lenz. 'It is Liszt that has influenced you, I can see; you are initiated, all the better,' was Chopin's reply. Lenz had chosen to play a Mazurka, and interpolated an extra flourish to one of the passages. Chopin was angered at this. He could not bear these 'extras' and at once blamed Liszt for the insult. 'He can do it, he is continually playing before thousands; I rarely play before one. You are the first pupil to come on his recommendation. I shall give you lessons twice a week, it is too difficult to find the time for more. But be punctual; with me everything is run by the clock.'

Lenz eventually had his way and did meet George Sand. He must have been one of those men who will not be rebuffed, whose self-esteem rides over every snub. One evening he was

invited to Madame Marliani's house, and was presented to the difficult woman, as well as to Pauline Viardot. Madame Sand did not speak a word to him on being introduced, and this determined him to sit at her side and make her talk. Chopin asked him to play something, 'but nothing of mine; play your Weber piece'. The piece meant was *L'invitation à la Valse*. At least Chopin was being kind to him, for had Lenz attempted anything of the Polish master the women would have rudely admonished him. Again George Sand said nothing, so once more this irrepressible Russian seated himself at her side. 'Are you not coming one day to St. Petersburg, where you are read so much and so greatly admired?' 'I should never humble myself to a country of slaves!' was the rude retort. 'You are right not to come,' answered Lenz just as rudely, 'you might find the door closed.' George Sand opened her beautiful big 'heifer' eyes in astonishment, Chopin appearing to be amused. She got up very theatrically and strode towards the fire-place, Lenz following her and seating himself at her side for the third time. She then pulled out an enormous cigar from a pocket and called out across the room: '*Frédéric, un fidibus!*' Chopin rose and brought her a spill. Now Lenz was beginning to understand Liszt's designation of 'Poor Frédéric'. After the first puff of smoke she said to Lenz 'At St. Petersburg, probably I could not smoke a cigar in a drawing-room?' 'In no drawing-room, Madame, have I ever seen a cigar smoked.'

This last remark appears to have struck home. Lenz, whose conceit is everywhere apparent, turned to look at the pictures on the walls, satisfied with his thrust, but more than ever convinced of Chopin's servitude. 'How I pitied him, the great artist!' he writes. The next day Chopin and George Sand called on the Russian at his hotel. He had told the porter to admit no one (perhaps he was too occupied in writing this story), and when handed their visiting cards could not contain his anger against the fool of a porter, who, after all, was only acting under instruction. That Madame Sand had learnt a lesson is shown by Chopin's remark to Lenz at their next meeting. 'Madame Dudevant [he rarely spoke of her as George Sand] has been with me to visit you; what a pity you were not there. I regret it very much. Madame thought she had been impolite to you.'

You would have seen how amiable she can be, for you have pleased her.'

Delacroix was at Nohant this summer, so the two artists could continue their discourses on art. Of the two, the painter scored, for he loved the art of Chopin and revelled in his playing, both of his own works and of those of his beloved Mozart.

Three fine pieces were composed during this period, the *F minor Ballade*, Op. 52, the *A flat Polonaise*, Op. 53, and the *E major Scherzo*, Op. 54. This is proved by the letter to Breitkopf and Härtel, dated December 15, 1842.

I have to offer you a Scherzo (for 600 francs), a Ballade (for 600) and a Polonaise (500). Besides these I have written an Impromptu, of several pages, which I do not even offer to you, as I wish to oblige one of my old acquaintances. . . .

Nothing of importance happened during the winter of 1842-1843. In the spring the entourage migrated to Nohant once again, although Madame Sand was beginning to spend more time there, even during the winter months. During the summer of 1843 Chopin went with a party on a trip 'along the valley of the Creuse, across hills, very picturesque but more impracticable than the Alps, as there were neither roads nor inns. Chopin climbed everywhere on his donkey, slept on straw, and was never better than during these hazards and fatigues.' George Sand wrote this to Madame Marliani on October 2. Chopin gives his version in an undated letter to Grzymala. Fontana had left for America in 1841 and Jasio Matuszynski was dead; Grzymala was therefore the only one of the three reliable friends available. He is now to be used as Fontana was, though Chopin is obviously more diffident about asking favours from him.

I told you that I should beg you to send a letter to my parents, and another to Leipsic with manuscripts. I have no one except you, to whom to entrust either of them. . . . My manuscripts are worth nothing, but it would mean a lot of work for me if they were lost. Here the Lady of the House is no better. I drag along as I can. . . . Several days ago we made an excursion in this neighbourhood to see the banks of the



CHÂTEAU OF NOHANT

*From Poiré's 'Chopin' by permission of Henri Laurens, Paris.*



Creuse. . . . It was a very successful trip, with friends who are neighbours; but she has been unwell since we returned, and has not been able to work for a few days. That distresses her, so things are not cheerful.

The château of Nohant was a large, rambling house, without any outward attractive features, surrounded on all sides by lawns, and flanked by flowers, shrubs and trees, very much like an English country house that is carelessly looked after. The hall opened into an oak dining-room and then into the salon, the large windows of which looked out onto the garden. On either side of the dining-room were the kitchen, a bathroom, a large bedroom and one other room. On the first floor, which was reached by a stone staircase, were seven bedrooms. Above were attics, including a very large loft sometimes used by Delacroix as a studio. Matthew Arnold wrote of it as 'a plain house by the roadside, with a walled garden'. In the distance beyond fields and meadows was the river Indre. One had a feeling of roominess and comfort and complete freedom from care.

The pianoforte was in the salon, and it was here that Chopin worked. How he did so when the house was full of guests is a mystery. As a rule the guests were intimate friends and admirers of his art, and to them he would play his newest creations, or improvise on fresh inspirations. These fresh ideas were retained until it was possible to jot them down, after which came the laborious part of the work. Probably the task of writing and composing was done after the departure of the guests, or when they were absent on walking or hunting tours; but, apart from the tranquillity and freedom of the country, the life could not have been particularly congenial to Chopin. Had he had a room or a house apart he must have been able to work more freely and at his own leisure. To be a recluse was out of the question with his morbidity and helplessness; but he should not have agreed to be one of a party. It was George Sand's house: she was the dominating spirit, and he for some years a willing slave for her pleasures. We can picture him being told like a schoolboy (for he was treated exactly like Maurice and Solange, perhaps even being considered more incapable) to play something either to amuse the Lady of the House alone, or to satisfy

the curiosity of her guests. George Sand describes an occasion when Mendizabal arrived unexpectedly at Nohant for dinner. 'He stayed for three hours; one was spent in dining and chatting, two in listening to Pauline sing and in making Chopin go through his whole repertoire.'

It was on such occasions as these that Chopin would show off his talent for mimicry. If he felt that his listeners were not equal to his art, or that his mood was not satisfying his hungry soul, he would suddenly become frivolous and imitate certain other pianists. He would even go out of the room and re-enter completely transformed, often unrecognizable. He was a master of facial contortions, and many actors and actresses envied him his talent. Balzac has mentioned him in *Un Homme d'affaires*, one of his short stories depicting Parisian life. A caricaturist named Bixiou is describing a certain Claparon. '“Had hair like this!” cried Bixiou, ruffling his locks till they stood on end. Gifted with the same talent for mimicking absurdities which Chopin the pianist possesses to so high a degree, he proceeded forthwith to represent the character with startling truth.' Moscheles alludes to Chopin's comic vein as an opposite to his sentimentality. By a slight disarrangement of his hair, a twist to his tie, and a glance into the mirror his transformation was complete. Usually it was his *bêtes-noires*, Russians, Jews and Englishmen, whom he chose for ridicule, and their comicality seemed all the more poignant coming from his sorrowful face. It was only when artists like Pauline Viardot or Delacroix came that he could feel understood. They adored his art, and worshipped his genius.

On July 22, 1843, he wrote rather a terse letter to Maurice Schlesinger, his chief Parisian publisher. 'Dear Friend! In the *Impromptu* [G flat] which you have issued in the Gazette of June 9 [it was published on July 9] the pages are wrongly numbered, which renders my composition incomprehensible. Though I am far from the meticulousness which our friend Moscheles shows with regard to his works, I still feel it my duty to your subscribers to ask you to insert in the next number the following *erratum*: Page 3, read page 5: Page 5, read page 3. If you are very busy, or too indolent to write me a word, you can answer me in your publication by means of this *erratum*. . . .'

Chopin returned to Paris for a few days on August 13, and wrote to George Sand at Nohant telling of his arrival and saying that he was bringing Solange back to her in three days' time. He had gone to see Schlesinger about some new manuscripts (most likely Opp. 52, 53, 54). In October he came to Paris again, bringing Maurice Sand with him. This we know from George Sand's letter to Mme Marliani, dated 'end of October'.

Here is my little Chopin, I confide him to you, take care of him. He looks after himself badly when I am not there, and his servant is good, but stupid. I am not anxious about his dinners, because he will have invitations on all sides, and besides, at that time of day there is no harm in his being forced to exert himself a little. But in the morning, in the rush of his lessons, I am afraid he will forget his cup of chocolate or of bouillon, which I force him to swallow in spite of himself when I am there.

George Sand had to remain at Nohant to superintend alterations in the gardens and outhouses; her anxiety was evidently acute, for she wrote also to Mlle de Rozières:

I have forced Chopin to go and resume his lessons, and to flee from the country which would become unhealthy for him in the bad season, because it is as cold as the devil in our big rooms. Maurice, also, must begin working in the studio again. It would have been a good thing to send Solange back too, but Chopin begged me to keep her so that he should not feel I was lonely. She does not complain, as you can imagine. See my little Chopin often, I beg you, and insist that he looks after himself. You can go to see these two boys without scandal; no one in the house will see anything wrong in it. Stroll round there, then, on one pretext or another to *keep an eye on* my Chopin, to see that he does not forget to lunch, and to *denounce* him to me if he behaves like an *ustuberlu* with regard to his health. He is well now, because he leads a regular life. Please God he will not do the exact opposite in Paris, but I count on you to scold him and to tell me if he is ill, because I would leave everything and go to him. Do not tell him that I am setting you like this at his heels.

In a postscript Madame Sand says that she is instructing Chopin's Polish servant to inform Mlle de Rozières immediately,

without his master's knowledge, if Chopin is ill. George Sand had noticed his frailty much more since Jasio's death, and her maternal affection (for there was little sensuality now in their liaison) compelled extra solicitude on her part.

Chopin wrote to her on November 26, saying, 'Illness is far from me, and I have only happiness before me'. But this was not true. He was ill after his arrival in Paris. George Sand in her letters to Maurice and her two women friends needs reassuring on this point. On November 17 she asks: 'Tell me if Chopin is not ill; his letters are so short and sad.' In the same month she writes to Maurice: 'I was quite certain that Chopin was ill. I guessed it so well that I was on the point of going to Paris.'

Chopin wrote on December 10 to Breitkopf and Härtel assigning to them the rights of most of his compositions from Op. 12 to Op. 54 inclusive.

I declare that I have ceded this property to the said firm, without reserve or time-limit and for all countries except France and England, and I acknowledge that I have received the price agreed upon, for which a separate receipt has been given.

The greatest sorrow possible then befell Chopin: the death of his father on May 3, 1844. As we have seen, his own health was deteriorating very noticeably, and all through the winter it had caused George Sand much anxiety. He was growing too feeble to walk upstairs and nearly always had to be carried. 'The death of his friend and then that of his father were two terrible blows,' George Sand wrote. 'He declined visibly, and I did not know what remedies to use to combat the increasing irritation of his nerves.' Nicolas Chopin died in his seventy-fourth year, after a life of love and self-sacrifice. He never lost his admiration for and belief in his son.

Frédéric was prostrate, and for quite a fortnight was extremely ill. George Sand tended and nursed him with real devotion. He could not even write to his mother, but Madame Sand wrote a tactful and flowery letter of condolence on May 29. As soon as the family heard of Frédéric's illness it was decided that his sister Louise and her husband, Kalasanty Jedrzeie-

wicz, should come to France to see him. When George Sand heard of their project she wrote warmly inviting them to Nohant and urging them to make use of her apartment in Paris, where 'Fritz' would go to meet them. (The family always addressed him as Fritz.) She prepared them for his altered appearance – they had not seen him for fourteen years – in the following words:

You will find my dear child very wretched and much changed since you last saw him, but do not be too alarmed about his health. There has been little change in his general condition for more than six years, during which time I have seen him every day. A rather violent spasm of coughing every morning, two or three more serious attacks, lasting only two or three days, every winter, a certain amount of neuralgia from time to time – this is his usual condition. Nevertheless, his chest is healthy, and his delicate constitution has suffered no damage. I always hope that in time he will become stronger, but I am sure that, with a regular life and plenty of care, his health will last as long as that of anyone else.

The remainder of her letter is taken up with expressions of amiable sentiments; she already loves Louise as a sister and greets her husband as an old friend, explaining at some length how she has always tried to comfort Chopin for the separation from his family which he has never ceased to feel.

Once again we are shown the finer side of her character – her ability to ride over trouble and trample on adversity. As soon as Frédéric had recovered sufficiently to travel she took him to Nohant for his convalescence. Gradually his strength and self-assurance returned, and by the time Louise arrived in Nohant he had regained his sense of perspective and normality.

Chopin must, however, have stayed in Paris until well on in July, for there is a letter of his to Breitkopf and Härtel dated Paris, July 16, 1844. In this he cedes to the above firm his last two compositions, the two *Nocturnes*, Op. 55, and the three *Mazurkas*, Op. 56. On July 27 he wrote to Grzymala from Nohant, asking his friend to procure a seat for Louise in a window at the Tuileries for some firework entertainment. On August 1 he wrote to Franchomme on publication matters, and a further

letter followed next day, because he 'was in a hurry yesterday'. He tells his friend to demand 600 francs for Opp. 55 and 56, but 'leave the two works for 500 if you think it necessary'. Another Paris publisher, Henri Lemoine, is anxious to buy them, but the composer still prefers Schlesinger, 'but if Lemoine will give 800 francs for them, he can have them'. Evidently, however, he would not pay this price, for Schlesinger published them in the following September. Grzymala had been ill for some time and Franchomme had taken on his unenviable task. Two days later Chopin wrote again and gratefully thanked him for the speed with which he had come to terms with Schlesinger.

Early in August Louise and her husband arrived. At first the situation must have been a little awkward. The world had coupled the two famous names together for some years, but Frédéric had never openly admitted to his parents the intimacy of the conditions under which he had been living. Latterly the two had decided to establish a more correct attitude for the sake of public opinion, making out that Chopin was an invited guest at Nohant as an old family friend. Their mode of living in Paris would satisfy the curious and proper, for they occupied separate establishments. Under these conditions they could pass as affectionate comrades – an arrangement that suited the sensitive Chopin and probably made things easier for George Sand; he would rather not be considered a lover, and she had no more desire to be thought his mistress. This state of mind had unconsciously been growing, and seemed quite a natural proceeding. Chopin's feebleness was gradually draining his physical desires, and he now demanded more nursing than love-making from his partner. In place of passion was a deep-rooted affection and adoration on his part, whilst George Sand, though quite content to mother him, was becoming more and more irritated by his petulance and sudden outbursts of temper.

When Louise arrived a feeling of real sympathy and cordial friendship was quickly established between the two women. It continued after Louise's departure, and in the correspondence that resulted they called each other 'sister'. It is certain that the older and more worldly woman was as gracious and charming to Louise as she could well be, and made her sojourn a time of happiness. Chopin was delighted beyond description. He loved

his family with more than usual devotion, and Louise was his favourite sister and most faithful correspondent. Her adoration for her brother is vividly seen from the few letters that have been saved. The recent death of their beloved father must have heightened their emotion at meeting; and their fourteen years' separation, Frédéric's feebleness, and the knowledge of his fame must have almost choked Louise.

The joy of his sister's company stimulated the invalid, and he began to take an interest in life once more. His depression had bred a miserable and bitter outlook, but this was evaporating and courage was taking its place. She had been a wonderful tonic to him, as George Sand did not fail to recognize. In a letter to Louise on September 28 she wrote:

Frédéric has suffered from the separation as you can well believe, but his physique has borne the strain fairly well. . . . I assure you that you are the best doctor he has ever had, because to talk of you to him is enough to give him back the love for life.

Frédéric accompanied his sister to Paris (the exact date is unknown), and stayed for a few days sightseeing with her. He wrote to Grzymala as follows:

I arrived the night before last, and am running about all the time with my sister, so every morning passes for nothing. How can I see you? To-day I take them to Rachel [the great actress], so I shall be near you. . . . They will still be here on Monday, and on Tuesday I go to Nohant and then home [*sic*]. Madame S. embraces you heartily.

By September 3 Louise and her husband had left for Poland, and Chopin wrote to Mlle de Rozières from Orléans:

So we have dreamed that we have seen Louise. God grant that she returns safe and sound to her family. You have been as charming as possible, and I have not thanked you enough for all your kindheartedness. . . . God will bless you; you love Louise. Pardon me for bringing you into my affairs.

He writes again to the same person on September 11 from

Nohant saying that his sister 'is standing the journey fairly well'. A week later he writes to Louise:

I send you the little songs that you heard one evening. Solange, who sends you a kiss (she has reminded me of it twice), wrote out the words for you from memory, and I the music. I hope you have arrived all right, and that you received news from me at Vienna and at Cracow. . . . I've been a bit inclined to grumble for some days. Maurice has not come yet, but is to return to-morrow, or the next day. You remember my telling you, when leaving here, that I should return by postal service, and that our whole journey will be for the preservation of certain conventionalities. . . . An aunt of the Lady of the House is here with her ward; as I wrote to you to Vienna, she lives with the ward, and she lives in your room. Often, when I come in, I look to see if there is nothing left of you, and I see only the same place by the couch, where we drank our chocolate, and the drawings that Kalasanty copied. More of you has remained in my room; on the table lies your embroidery – that slipper, – folded inside an English blotter, and on the piano a tiny pencil, which was in your pocket-book, and which I find most useful.

Here is the sentimental Chopin. He treasured the slipper all his life. The reference to Maurice is important in view of future happenings.

In a letter to Franchomme, September 20, Chopin asks him to collect 600 francs from Schlesinger for the last manuscripts, of which 'you will keep out 100 francs for me'. He had borrowed 500 francs from the 'cellist. 'I often think of the last evening which we spent with my dear sister.' Three days later Chopin writes from Paris to George Sand.

'How are you? Here I am in Paris. . . . I have seen Mlle de Rozières [their differences obviously having been settled], who kept me to lunch. I have seen Franchomme and my publisher. I have seen Delacroix, who keeps his room. We talked for two and a half hours; of music, of painting, and especially of you. I have engaged my place for Thursday [this letter was dated Monday]; Friday I shall be with you. . . . To-morrow I shall try over some Sonatas with Franchomme. . . . I will say nothing more except that I am well and that I am your most fossilized fossil.'

This letter shows Chopin in a happier vein. His talks with Louise had broadened his point of view concerning his relationship with George Sand. A comment on this changed attitude can be seen at the finish of a letter written by the latter to Mme Marliani towards the end of September. 'Chopin, thanks to his sister, who is more advanced than he, has now recovered from his prejudices. It is a notable conversion, of which he is himself unaware. Thus, in the midst of fatigues and cares, something happy and comforting always turns up.'

Mlle de Rozières has won herself back to favour with a vengeance. Chopin writes often and affectionately to her, and she corresponds regularly with Louise. On October 22 he tells her that Louise has asked him 'to tell you how fond she is of you. . . . Please keep well. Here it's not so bad, but no exaggerated good health'. On October 31 he tells her that he will be in Paris in a few days, adding in a postscript: 'My sister sends in her letters a thousand affectionate messages for you. Amuse yourself with Bach for me.' The same day he writes to Louise, saying that he expects to stay two or three weeks more at Nohant. He speaks kindly of Solange, but of Maurice he says 'courtesy is not in his nature, so don't be surprised that he has given me no message for your husband about that little machine for cigars'. It is curious to find Chopin referring to the 'Lady of the House' in all his family letters. Was he still shy?

There are two more letters to Mlle de Rozières (November 14 and 20) telling her when to expect him in Paris; but he rarely acted according to plan. However, on December 2 he writes from Paris to George Sand, probably having reached the capital on November 29. He begs her to take care of herself and not to get over-tired. 'To-morrow a new letter with your permission. Always yours, older than ever; very, extremely, incredibly old. . . . CH.'

George Sand had not been well for some time, and it is touching to find Chopin so energetic in his inquiries. On December 5 he wrote again, asking her to put off the journey to Paris until 'the latest possible date, so that it may be less cold; here it is fabulous; everyone says that the winter is coming too suddenly'. Later on he refers to Franchomme's son: 'The boy was pink, fresh, warm and bare-legged: I was yellow, faded,

cold and with three flannels under my trousers.' At the top of the first page of this letter he wrote: 'Do not suffer. Do not suffer.' He signs himself 'Your mummified ancient - CH.' They still appear to be the best of friends and necessary to each other.

The promise of a bitter winter as seen in this letter was fulfilled, and was a tragedy for Chopin's health. His chest could not withstand a rigorous climate and his fits of coughing increased in intensity and number. Several times during the winter he was ill for some days, but continued his lessons notwithstanding. Madame Sand was still disturbed about him and continually reminded her Parisian friends to be watchful over her *petit*. According to a letter to Witwicki, the poet, written at Easter, 1845, Chopin says that the weather was 'colder than ever, this is the first day without snow in the garden'. He speaks of his mother most adoringly, and tells of having heard Mozart's *Requiem* a few days before, and of looking forward to hearing Haydn's *Creation* that evening with Delacroix.

The hard winter was followed by an exceedingly wet summer; nevertheless, Madame Sand wrote to Madame Marliani:

Chopin is fairly well; he is sleeping, eating, and has had no indisposition at all during the summer, though he always affects illness, as do all unhealthy men, and anticipates his burial at every moment, with a certain pleasure. He also should have distractions, but he does not know how to be alone, and I cannot always live in Paris. Dr. Papet has examined him again this year, sounding him with the most minute attention. He found all the organs perfectly healthy, but he thinks him inclined to hypochondria, and that he will always be prone to alarm himself until he has passed his fortieth year and his nerves have lost their excessive sensibility.

Chopin went to Nohant during the third week of June. He describes the terrible storms and torrents of rain to Grzymala on July 8, 1845. 'The oldest persons cannot remember such a flood; it destroyed mills and swept away bridges.' On July 20 he wrote a long letter to his family, in which he again rambles sentimentally about Louise's old room.

I have written three new Mazurkas [Op. 59] which will probably come out in Berlin. . . . Also I have received an





invitation from the committee which is to put up a monument to Beethoven at Bonn, to come for the inauguration. You can guess how likely I am to go.

He tells them that the *Sonata*, Op. 58, and the *Berceuse*, Op. 57, are already out. Then follows varied news, and a good story about Victor Hugo.

M. Billard, an *historical painter*, not specially famous, and an ugly man, had a pretty wife, whom Hugo seduced. M. Billard surprised his wife with the poet, so that Hugo was obliged, as the man wanted to arrest him, to show his medal of a peer of France, in order to gain a moment's respite. M. Billard wanted to bring an action against his wife, but it ended in a private separation. Hugo suddenly started off for a several months' trip. Mme Hugo (who is fine) has taken Mme Billard under her protection; and Juliette (an actress of the Porte St. Martin theatre, who has been famous here for ten years, and whom Hugo has long been keeping, in spite of Mme Hugo and his children, and his poems on family morality) – this Juliette has gone with him. . . . Add to it that Hugo is getting on for fifty and always, on every occasion, plays the part of a serious person, superior to everyone.

At the end of the letter are to be found four amusing French jokes which prove that Chopin had not lost his sense of the ridiculous.

He writes again to his family on October 1, and heads the letter 'It's stupid, never to finish on the same day as one begins; this letter has taken five days to get written'. His brother-in-law had been badly bitten by harvesters the previous year in Nohant and Frédéric writes to say that

there are far fewer of them this year, and the hypothesis is that they over-ate themselves on Kalasanty [Jedrzejewicz] last year and died. . . . In Bonn they are selling cigars: *véritables cigarres à la Beethoven*, who probably smoked nothing but Viennese pipes; and there has already been such a sale of old bureaus and old desks which belonged to Beethoven, that the poor composer of the Pastoral symphony would have had to drive a huge trade in

furniture. . . . Oh, how time goes! I don't know how it is, but I can't do anything of any value, and yet I am not idle. I don't wander from corner to corner, as I did with you, I just sit whole days and evenings in my room. Yet I must finish certain manuscripts before leaving here, for I can't compose in winter. Since you left I have composed nothing but that Sonata [Op. 58]. Now I have nothing ready for the press except some new mazurkas [Op. 59], and I need to have something. I hear the diligences passing the garden; won't one of them stop, and won't one of you get out! . . . Someone wrote to me from Paris that Artot, the violinist, is dead. That boy, so strong and healthy, with those big bones and broad shoulders, died of consumption a few weeks ago. — No one, seeing us two, would guess that he would die first and of consumption.

The next recorded letter to his family was on December 12. It is interesting because he talks of some of the last compositions published during his lifetime.

I should like now to finish my Violoncello Sonata, Barcarolle and something else that I don't know how to name [Op. 61]; but I doubt whether I shall have time, for the rush is beginning. I have received many inquiries whether I will give a concert, but I doubt it.

This letter was written on several different days. On December 24 he continued:

The door-bell never leaves off tinkling. To-day the entire household has colds. That I cough insufferably is not surprising; but the Lady of the House has a cold, and her throat hurts, so that she has to keep her room, which makes her very impatient. The better health people usually have, the less patience they have in bodily suffering. There is no remedy for that in the world; even intellect is no help. All Paris is coughing this week. . . . We have a sad Christmas Eve here, because she is ill and will not have a doctor; her cold is very bad, and she has had to go to bed. Everybody curses the climate of Paris; they forget that in the country in winter it is still worse, and that winter is winter everywhere. These two or three months are hard to get through. I often ask myself how people of impatient temper can live under a sky even more inclement than this one. Sometimes

I would give years of my life for a few hours of sunshine. I have outlived so many persons younger and stronger than I, that I think I must be immortal.

The Christmas of 1845 cannot have been a festive affair for the household – Madame Sand in bed with a sore throat, Solange with a bad cold, and Chopin ‘worst of all’. He asks his family not to worry about him; ‘the Lord is good to me’. All through these family letters one can see the pathetic but brave figure endeavouring to be cheerful and hiding his rapid decline. By telling them of his new compositions, which, although few in number, were amongst his finest, he proves that he is working. This attempt to put his best side forward is a welcome change to the grumblings and dejections which characterized the letters to his friends in previous years. If only he had been allowed to continue this life of more or less contentment, he might have died tolerably happy.

## CHAPTER XXI

### BREACH WITH GEORGE SAND

1846-1847

THE spring and summer of 1846 at Nohant were just as lovely as the previous autumn and winter had been detestable. The spring was late in arriving, but, as is so often the case after long and hungry winters, it burst at once into full glory and warm sunshine. Madame Sand had not recovered entirely from her bronchial trouble, and decided to take early advantage of the warmth and beauty, and breathe in *l'air frais de la campagne*. She left Paris during the first days of May. Maurice, her son, had gone in April on his annual visit to his father. Chopin was prevented from leaving Paris by his lessons, for the decision of Madame Sand was at least sudden, but he followed as soon as possible. That he was there before the end of the month is proved by a letter to Mlle de Rozières, written at Whitsuntide, asking her to send him his score of Mozart's *Requiem*. The brilliance of the weather was too alluring to miss, and it is not surprising to find Madame Sand's house more popular than ever and full of laughter and gaiety. The only apparent displeasure was the growing misunderstanding between Chopin and Maurice Sand. For some time this antipathy had been developing, and it had now become noticeable to everyone. During this summer their hostility became acute; and a definite break finally came through Madame Sand's adopted niece, Augustine Brault.

The two children of George Sand, Maurice and Solange Dudevant (Maurice took the pen-name of his mother when he came of age, and Solange signed it when she married) were thoroughly spoilt. They had always been badly brought up. Maurice was the mother's darling; she could find no fault in him. As a boy he had had neither discipline nor teaching, and after the separation of his parents was allowed far too much liberty. He mixed too freely with his elders, most of whom were people of culture and fame, and assumed the airs of an

adult before he had learnt the rudiments of self-control. He left college in his fifteenth year, and though he had a succession of private tutors, he paid scant heed to their ministrations, always being able to shelter behind his adoring mother. In 1841 his education was considered to be complete – it had not really begun – and we find him embarking on a so-called artistic career, a very easy and common way out for lazy young men without talent. He decided to become a painter, and endeavoured to study seriously. But he was a dilettante. He had never learned to concentrate; and though his mother continually refers to his artistic soul and nature, his talent was too small and his application too scanty to justify the calling of an artist. As he grew up into manhood his time became even less occupied, and he indulged in the usual escapades and bad habits of idle youngsters. He began to resent the presence of Chopin as an *habitué* in his mother's house. He and Frédéric had almost nothing in common. As a boy Maurice liked his mother's friend, but as he grew older he realized that Chopin had no interest in his exploits, and took no part in the various athletic expeditions and usual masculine pastimes. His liking began to diminish. He clung more than ever to his mother; they became inseparable, their devotion intense. He was jealous of her interest in and admiration for Chopin, and never ceased to look for some opportunity or excuse for hurting this sensitive 'boarder' whom his mother insisted on housing. There is no doubt that he was the cause of many eruptions between the two artists, who, however distant their points of view may have been, still had sympathies and contacts which were above the level of his understanding. From 1842 to 1846 this antipathy had increased, and when the young man's affection for Augustine Brault had caused a minor scandal nothing could prevent an open quarrel.

Solange was even more unfortunate in her upbringing; her education had been still more neglected. When George Sand first went to Paris after the separation from M. Dudevant, she did not take her daughter, but the child was there with her later. There was no room for a nursery in the mansard roof that she inhabited, so Solange had full run of the home and absolute freedom with the visitors. When her mother went to Venice

with Musset, Solange was taken care of by the two grandmothers. Her resemblance to her father's mother was remarkable, which did not please Madame Dupin. Then for a while she was looked after by the *femme de chambre* at Nohant until her mother came and took her again to Paris. She was a witness of many of the family rows at Nohant, and although her mother maintained that she was too young to understand them, they undoubtedly affected her nature. This was not the atmosphere of love and kindness which children should experience, and much of the callousness and lack of shame which characterized her nature later was due to these unfortunate early surroundings. She was sent to school for a period all too short, and accompanied her mother to Geneva, where she copied her masculine garb. She was not without intelligence, but again, like her brother, she was a riderless horse, and could not steer herself. No less than five tutors successively undertook to instruct her, but none stayed long. Another misfortune interfered with her natural development. George Sand went to Paris to tend her dying mother and M. Dudevant thought this the opportune moment to steal Solange. On her return, the mother went at once to Guillery, the home of her husband, and with the aid of gendarmes forcibly recovered her daughter. Then followed the Majorcan episode, where both children more or less led the life of wild animals. The life in Nohant and Paris for the next few years was comparatively regular, Mlle de Rozières being chiefly responsible for Solange's general education. But it was too late; the girl was too forward to submit to any kind of discipline. Her character was already formed. Her environment had been her tutor, her vivid experiences were her lessons, her abnormal freedom had damaged her soul. She had been a naughty child, and was allowed to grow up to revel in her naughtiness. She would have been an excellent Katharine to any Petruchio, for she was good looking, of fine physique, had an abundance of spirit, was capricious, bold, and always ready for a flirtation. Chopin was to become aware of this last trait.

The third young person who was to be a disturbing factor in the hitherto amicable relationship between the two chief protagonists was Augustine Brault. Adèle Brault, the mother of

Augustine, was what the world deems a light woman. Eventually she married an artisan. The Brault family were country neighbours at Nohant, and the girl often visited her mother's cousin Madame Sand, whom she considered an aunt. In her games with the Sand children she proved agreeable; her charming disposition and naturalness of manner were qualities lacking in Solange, and soon she had endeared herself to such an extent that Madame Sand wished to adopt her. Madame Brault was an uncultured woman and had no further vision than that her daughter should become a breadwinner for the family. Augustine liked music and worked hard and conscientiously, hoping some day to earn her living as a teacher. George Sand quickly saw that the child's talent would never lead her very far, but she arranged for her to receive the best tuition possible. Directly Madame Brault heard of the proposed adoption she saw a chance of making some money easily, and demanded from Madame Sand a sum equivalent to what she imagined she was losing. The two women conferred, and an agreement was drawn up whereby the girl's mother was paid a sum and an agreed allowance, and Augustine became a second daughter of the house at Nohant. Her mother remained obstreperous for some time, but eventually was silenced.

The moment this arrangement became effectual, Solange turned against the intruder. From childhood she had looked with scorn on her cousin-playmate, and treated her as beneath herself. Her own aristocratic breeding was, no doubt, for ever instilled into her by her mother, who could not forget her lineage, despite the waywardness of all her antecedents. Solange would not tolerate any thought of equality with a plebeian child, and soon there was open hostility between them. She had never been a favourite with her mother, nor did she mind very much, and she certainly had no sisterly love for her brother. Maurice retaliated by taking Augustine's part against his sister – securing himself still further in his mother's affections by his action – and almost immediately there were two opposing camps. Chopin, who was now finding Solange attractive in her youthful freshness, became her champion. When Maurice's friendship with Augustine became noticeably intimate and stories and scandal filled the air, the position became acute.

Thus were sown the first seeds of the final rupture between Chopin and George Sand.

Throughout this wonderful summer, when the wine harvest, particularly the Burgundian vintage, was considered the finest since 1811, family dissensions went on. Of course the mother refused to admit the possibility of an illicit love existing between her son and Augustine. She insisted that they were only great friends, not sufficiently in love to desire to marry, although nothing would have given her so much pleasure. Madame Brault, on the other hand, declared with much vehemence that all was engineered by George Sand. Solange sought refuge with the only possible person, Chopin, and filled his mind with exaggerated versions and perversions. He objected to Augustine's intrusion almost as much as Maurice objected to his. Disputes and quarrels, explanations and reconciliations were of daily occurrence. In the end some sort of amicability was reached, but it could only be a truce. Maurice and Chopin agreed to forget, but their mutual dislike was already too bitter. Solange and Chopin became more concrete companions. It is said that she purposely tried to alienate his affections from her mother, and so awaken pangs of jealousy as a form of punishment, and that she found no difficulty in attracting him with her eighteen-year-old charm against that of her forty-two-year-old mother. Be this as it may, her ruse was successful inasmuch that a coldness became apparent which was never again entirely dissipated.

During all this unpleasantness George Sand was finishing her novel *Lucrezia Floriani*, the book which has so often been cited as the final cause of the disruption. But before attempting to sift the arguments for and against this assertion, we should be aware of certain happenings before its publication in the following year.

The evening before Madame Sand left Paris for Nohant in May 1846, Chopin gave a grand dinner *chez lui*. He invited the Prince and Princess Czartoryski, the Princess Sapieha, Delacroix, Louis Blanc (the historian), Pauline Viardot and her husband, and several friends of Madame Sand. It was a great occasion, darkened by no shadows of the coming conflict. On the invitation cards were just three words, 'Music, flowers, food'.

When he arrived at Nohant soon afterwards for what was destined to be his last visit, Chopin was conscious at once of a changed atmosphere. Not only was Maurice antagonistic, but George Sand herself was noticeably distant to him. He was made to realize that his malady was getting on her nerves, that he was not so welcome as usual. She was tiring of being his nurse, had already tired of being his mistress, and probably had no further wish to be his benefactress. However, he struggled manfully on, determined to work and to recuperate if possible. He did not accompany the various parties on their 'drives and excursions, for these things tire me more than they are worth'. He was weary and dejected, and was irritated still more by seeing the younger and healthier people enjoying themselves with such ease.

All this we glean from a long letter written to his family from Nohant on October 11, 1846, which Chopin admits having begun a dozen times. We find him enthusiastic over an English invention. A certain Mr. Faber 'has exhibited a very ingenious automaton, which he calls Euphonia', which sings *God save the Queen* clearly, the words as well as the air. He hints at the possibility of an Opera House having several such machines and doing away with the chorus, which costs such a lot. Was this a forerunner of the modern gramophone? We are given some truths about Covent Garden further on. 'It has never had much success on account of its site, which is far away from the fashionable world. . . . Fashion and elegance count for more in London than any wonders of art.' If he were alive to-day he could quite well reiterate this statement.

I play a little, I write a little. Sometimes I am satisfied with my violoncello sonata, sometimes not. I throw it into the corner, then take it up again. I have three new Mazurkas [Op. 63], I don't think they have the old [word illegible]; but for that one must have time to judge rightly. When one does a thing, it appears good, otherwise one would not write it. Only later comes reflection, and one discards or accepts the thing. Time is the best censor and patience a most excellent teacher.

He was becoming much more of a philosopher. He tells his people that he is going to Paris ahead of the family as the chil-

dren 'are in no hurry to return to town'. He hazards a guess that both of them will be married in the spring, but adds, 'This is between ourselves'. In the light of subsequent events this is of interest. He is greatly concerned about the dismissal of old Pierre, the gardener at Nohant for forty years, and Françoise, maidservant for twenty-one years – the two longest established servants. 'God grant that the newcomers may please the young man and the new cousin better.'

Reading between the lines we must see that the old state of affairs no longer existed. Maurice had assumed command; his mother readily acquiesced; the cousin was in the conspiracy; and Solange and Chopin were probably never consulted. It was in this frame of mind that Chopin left Nohant for the last time early in November. He had accomplished a certain amount of work, notwithstanding, for there is a letter to Breitkopf and Härtel from Paris, November 19, in which he finally disposes of the *Barcarolle*, Op. 60, the *Polonaise-Fantaisie*, Op. 61, and the *Two Nocturnes*, Op. 62, to them. He finished the *Sonata*, Op. 65, at Nohant, and it is significant to notice that this was his last serious effort at composition.

There are four letters written to George Sand from Paris before the end of the year. They contain nothing of interest except complaints about the cold weather: 'I have not the courage to leave my fireplace for a moment.' They are amiable letters and he is 'your devoted Ch'. He never fails to inquire about her health, or to advise her to take care, or to send greetings to the children. It is a great pity that we have none of George Sand's letters of this period to him – they would help us to unravel the mysterious tangle.

The winter was again severe; everyone was ill, Delacroix could only muster sufficient energy to reach the Luxembourg, Grzymala had been seventeen days without sleep, and Chopin forced himself to go to New Year's dinner with the Princess Czartoryska looking more like a huddled-up bear than a human being. Meanwhile the Sand family were proceeding with their pantomimes (which Chopin had invented for them during the summer), charades and plays. The flirtatious Solange had become affianced, as Chopin had hinted on October 11, and so the jollifications were interlarded with trousseau pre-

parations. Suddenly, at the end of January, the engagement was broken off. The whole *ménage* precipitately returned to Paris on February 5, and the poor fiancé, Fernand des Préaulx, was forsaken. George Sand had already endeavoured to marry Solange to Louis Blanc, but this had fallen through. The second attempt was made on a young poet, Victor de Laprade. The third was only a country squire, and we can imagine the impossibility of such a union, knowing the tastes and aspirations of Solange.

The Sand family only stayed in Paris until the beginning of April, but that was sufficient time for this desirous young woman to fall in love again. A young sculptor, Auguste Jean Baptiste Clésinger, aged 33, had been working on two busts of George Sand and Solange. He was the next victim; but this time she was to marry, and the mother was not so happy.

Hitherto Solange had been a successful Katharine, having found no one able to master her; but now she met her Petruchio. Clésinger was obstinate and full of assurance. He was the type that will not take 'no' for an answer. Solange was swept off her feet. The mother did not approve of this 'true madman' and hurriedly took her daughter back to Nohant, hoping to dissuade her from the violent attachment and to be able to prevent her overbearing suitor from visiting the house. She sent a message to Chopin by Madame Marliani on April 8, which he answered on the 10th. The last line of this note is significant: 'just a word about all that when you can'. Within a week Clésinger made his appearance at Nohant, much to the mother's chagrin, and demanded a definite answer. Solange said 'yes'; George Sand was beaten. She wrote to Maurice asking him to return at once; at the moment she had no one to help her, for Chopin's advice was no longer sought. At the end of this letter, written on April 16, is a remarkable sentence: 'Not one word of this to Chopin; it does not concern him, and when the Rubicon is crossed, the *ifs* and the *buts* will only do harm.'

Let us read Chopin's version, contained in a family letter begun during the first week of April and finished on the 19th.

Sol is not going to be married yet; after they had arrived here for the contract, she changed her mind; I am sorry about

it and sorry for the boy, who is a good fellow and in love; but it is better that it should happen before the wedding than after. It is supposed to be just put off, but I know what is behind. You ask what I shall do this summer; just the same as always: I shall go to Nohant as soon as it is warm.

Chopin, perhaps, had expected the regular routine, but George Sand had other ideas. She had no intention of allowing Maurice to be upset any more, even at the expense of hurting Chopin's feelings. Besides, Chopin and Solange had been antagonistic to her, and the memory of this could not be effaced. Further on he says:

Madame S. writes me that she will be here at the end of next month and to wait for them. Probably it is about Sol's wedding (but not with the man about whom I told you). May God grant them good things. . . . If anyone deserves happiness, Madame S. does.

The discharge of another servant, Luce, who had lived at Nohant ever since she was born, distresses Chopin extremely. It is apparent that he bears George Sand no animosity as yet. His health appears to be no worse, for he talks of giving seven lessons on some days, and posing for his portrait to Ary Scheffer. A quite casual reference is made to *Lucrezia Floriani*, 'which here also has aroused less enthusiasm than the others'. This does not sound as though Chopin had already concluded that the character of Prince Karol was a portrait of himself.

There are two letters to George Sand dated April 29 and May 15 respectively which clearly show that Chopin is blissfully ignorant of her changed attitude towards him. They are both short. The first begins: 'You perform prodigies of industry, and I am not surprised. May God assist you' and ends 'Take care of yourself. Be happy and at rest. Yours with all devotion, CH.' The second one mainly concerns Solange:

How can I tell you how much pleasure your good letter that I have just received has given me, and how much interested I am in the excellent details concerning all that is now occupying you. You know well that among your friends, no one more

sincerely desires the happiness of your child than I do. Tell her so from me, please. I am well again. God uphold you always in your strength and activity. Be happy and at peace. Yours with all devotion, CH.

These are simple and friendly letters. No one can read malice into them. Their sincerity is evident in every phrase. One can feel also the sincerity which prompted him to write the following congratulatory letter to Solange:

I have already asked your Mother, a few days ago, to convey to you my sincerest wishes for your future; and now I cannot refrain from telling you of all the pleasure that I have derived from your charming little letter, from which you appear to me to be so happy. You are at the summit of joy, and I hope that you will always remain there. With all my soul I desire your unchanging prosperity.

Between the dates of his letters to Madame Sand Chopin was very ill. George Sand heard of this from the Princess Czartoryska, who was nursing him, and immediately wrote to Mlle de Rozières asking for details and news. 'I am very frightened. Is it true that Chopin has been really ill? . . . I am ill with uneasiness and whilst I write to you am dizzy.' It was impossible for her to leave the lovers at Nohant, for even Maurice was not there to save them from scandal. She believed that the approaching marriage of Solange had upset Chopin and that each reminder of it reacted painfully on him, admitting that she could not write to him about it, though it could no longer be kept a mystery. 'I can no longer make Chopin the head and counsellor of the family, my children would not accept him and the dignity of my life would be lost.'

George Sand could not have realized that this sudden attack may have been brought about by her 'mystery'; that Chopin was suffering indignities likewise; that his sensitiveness could not bear being discarded; that his pride would not permit him to complain. She did not intend to realize these things. She was heartily sick of being his nurse and stand-by, which is understandable; whatever physical attraction existed had vanished long ago; her children were now adults and resented

their mother having a man always in attendance, and it mattered not to them whether she was his nurse or his mistress. For some time they had been expressing their views freely and openly, and when the dislike between Maurice and Chopin flared up she saw her opportunity. Chopin had felt the tension growing all through that last disagreeable summer and was aware of the machinations of Maurice and Augustine – to the latter he continued to attribute the whole of the blame – but he hoped that George Sand would survive the disturbances and that during the next summer at Nohant all would be forgotten. He was disillusioned.

Before George Sand had made up her mind to begin her *liaison* with Chopin she wrote a fantastic and verbose letter to his friend Grzymala, parts of which we remember reading. In this effusion she asked for advice and laid bare her soul, as if she were an inexperienced woman nervously attempting a first affair. We find her again in two minds, and once more turning to the same counsellor and excusing her actions. If she had possessed an inferiority complex one could have put up with such absurdities, but with her, whose assurance would have done credit to a Dictator, such self-abasement was only a pose.

Her letter to Grzymala was written on May 12, four days after being so 'frightened' on hearing that Chopin was gravely ill.

Thank you, dear friend, for your good letters. I knew in a vague and uncertain way that he was ill twenty-four hours before the letter from the good Princess. Thank that angel for me also. What I suffered during those twenty-four hours it is impossible to tell you, and whatever had happened I was so placed that I could not have stirred. Well, once more he is saved, but how dark the outlook is for me in that quarter! I do not yet know if my daughter will be married here in a week, or in Paris in a fortnight. In any case, I shall be in Paris for a few days at the end of the month, and if Chopin can be moved I shall bring him back here. My friend, I am as happy as possible about the marriage of my daughter, because she is enraptured with love and joy, which Clésinger seems to me to deserve! He loves her passionately and will give her the life she desires. Be that as it may, one suffers a lot in taking such a decision.

I think that Chopin must also have suffered at not knowing, at not understanding and not being able to give any advice. But his advice on the real affairs of life is impossible to take seriously. He has never seen facts truly, nor understood human nature on any point; his soul is all poetry and music and he cannot put up with anything that differs from him. Besides, his influence in the affairs of my family would mean for me the loss of all dignity and of all love between me and my children.

Talk to him and try to make him understand in a general way that he must give up bothering about them. If I tell him that Clésinger (whom he does not like) deserves our affection, he will only hate him more, and will incur Solange's hatred. All this is difficult and delicate, and I do not know any way of calming and restoring a sick mind which is irritated at every effort to cure it. The evil that gnaws at this poor being morally and physically has been killing me for a long time, and I see him go away without ever having been able to do him any good, since the principal cause of his sadness is the anxiety, jealousy and distrust of the affection he bears me. For seven years I have lived like a virgin with him and with others, I have grown old prematurely and even without effort or sacrifice, so weary was I of passion, so disillusioned and so past recovery. If any woman on earth ought to have inspired in him the most complete confidence, it was I, and he never realized it; and I know that many people accuse me, some with having worn him out by the violence of my passions, others with having reduced him to despair by my follies. I believe that you know what it is. He complains of me that I have killed him by deprivation, whilst I was certain that I should have killed him if I had acted otherwise. See how I am placed in this fatal friendship, in which I made myself his slave whenever I could do so without showing him an impossible and culpable preference over my children, when the respect which I ought to inspire in my children and in my friends has been so ticklish and so important to preserve. I have achieved, in this respect, prodigies of patience of which I did not believe myself capable, I, who never had a saintly disposition like the Princess. I have been martyred; but Heaven has been inexorable against me, as if I had great crimes to expiate; for in the middle of all these efforts and all these sacrifices, he whom I love with an absolutely chaste and maternal love is dying a victim of his insensate attachment for me.

May God in his goodness grant that at least my children may

be happy, that is to say good, noble, at peace with their consciences; because, as for happiness, I do not believe in it in this world, and the law of Heaven is so strict in this regard that it is almost an impious revolt to think of not suffering from external things. The only strength in which we can take refuge is the will to carry out our duties.

Remember me to Anna and tell her the depths of my heart and then burn my letter. I send you one for the good Gutmann whose address I don't know. Do not give it to him in front of Chopin who does not yet know that I have been told of his illness, and who will prefer me not to know of it. His worthy and generous heart has a thousand exquisite scruples side by side with the cruel aberrations which are killing him. Ah! if only Anna could talk to him one day, and delve into his heart to cure him. But he seals himself hermetically against his best friends. Goodbye, my dear, I love you. Rely on me always to have courage and perseverance and devotion, in spite of my sufferings, and that I will not complain. Solange embraces you. —

GEORGE.

It is necessary to quote the whole of this letter so that a false opinion will not be formed. Could anything be more hypocritical? Once again George Sand whitewashes herself. She can never do wrong. She liked to imagine that she was the only sufferer, yet her vanity compelled her to think that Chopin's love for her was killing him. If she had not tired of him she would not have wished to desert him. The children were used as a subterfuge. We are grateful to Grzymala for not destroying this letter, for it has exposed her inner feelings and laid bare her motives.

Solange and Clésinger were married on May 20 at Nohant. The bride's father and mother were present, although the latter almost missed the ceremony through an accident to a muscle in her leg. By this time George Sand had convinced herself that her son-in-law was a fine man, hard-working, active, persevering, gallant and a sincere artist. He was strong, physically and morally, and very much in love, his love being reciprocated by Solange. Yet George Sand was not happy; she had a sentiment of future trouble.

In the new *Collection Polonaise* of Chopin letters is a hitherto unpublished letter to his family dated June 8, 1847. It is

extremely important, for it shows Chopin's intense dislike for Clésinger, and mentions Madame Sand more freely than usual. Chopin could not go to the marriage ceremony because he was too fatigued after a violent attack of asthma, but he admits that he is not sorry because he would not have known how to comport himself. He relates how nearly every day in Paris the mother and daughter had posed for their busts, how they had accepted flowers and presents of all sorts, including some pet dogs – 'this is why I told you in my last letter that you would hear of him [Clésinger] again. . . . The mother is adorable, but she has not a *groschen* of good sense.' Maurice was on Clésinger's side because he detested Préaulx on account of his good family and his good manners, and also because he profited from the fact that Solange's father was giving her no dowry. All the information that the friends (Madame Marliani, Delacroix and Arago amongst them) could gather about the new son-in-law was deplorable. He was in debt; he was brutal, beat his mistress, drank too freely (but that was put down to his genius), and none of the friends could understand how George Sand could tolerate him. The sculptor had not made a good impression in Paris; he had recently exhibited a statue of a naked woman in a posture so indecent that he was obliged to twine a serpent round her legs. Everyone was amazed that such a girl as Solange could fall in love with a man who exhibited 'works so voluptuous, not to say lewd'. Chopin was afraid that at the next exhibition the world would see '*dans le marbre blanc le petit derrière de Sol*'. Clésinger's father was also a sculptor, but his fame did not reach beyond his native town of Besançon. Clésinger was one of an enormous number of children; his youth was very unsatisfactory, and he had to flee from Italy because of his debts in Florence. Since his father would have nothing to do with him, he enlisted in the *cuirassiers*, where he did not stay long. He had no friends and no connections. His father was not present at the wedding, and all that was known of his mother was that she was in the habit of spending the whole day in her chemise. A certain M. d'Arpentigny, who had introduced Clésinger to Madame Sand, was so upset upon hearing of the marriage that he immediately wrote to her tactfully disclaiming all responsibility, and never went to her house

again. Chopin was right when he prophesied that the happiness of the couple would not last for a year after the birth of the first child. But he comforts himself by thinking that everything that Madame Sand undertakes, however unpromising, turns out well in the end:

Even her differences with her husband have been to her advantage – she has kept beside her the children whom she loves above everything – she has brought them up in health and happiness – she herself enjoys good health, although she works enormously – after having written so many books (more than 90) her eyesight is intact – everyone adores her – she is not poor – she is charitable – instead of having a wedding-party for her daughter, she gave 1,000 francs for the poor of her parish. It happens, nevertheless, that she does not always speak the truth – but that is permitted to a novelist.

Chopin is still wondering whether or not he will go to Nohant. Of all the servants that Louise knew not one is left, and he is afraid of strange faces. He was yet to discover that he was not to be invited.

Less than three weeks after her daughter's marriage George Sand announced the engagement of her adopted Augustine to a friend of Maurice, a young painter named Théodore Rousseau. She had hoped that her two favourites would marry each other, but consoled herself with the thought that their love was fraternal. A fortnight later, June 22, the engagement was broken off, the reason given being the debts and the poor health of the painter. But this was far from the truth.

Solange had not forgotten the previous summer. She wished for revenge against her mother, and the most vulnerable point of attack was Augustine. Rousseau was told of the intimacy which had been presumed to exist between his fiancée and Maurice. He fled. Soon afterwards the Clésingers arrived at Nohant. Sides were taken, and the family was in torment. A full account of the quarrel was given to Mlle de Rozières by George Sand in a series of letters in July and August. In the first letter the mother starts with a violent indictment of Solange, calling her cold, ungrateful and bitter, and saying that she had caused her nothing but suffering since she was born. The

young couple had stayed at Nohant a fortnight, had behaved with a scandalous and unheard-of insolence, had left without paying any of their debts, and had taken away even the counterpanes and candlesticks. George was forced 'not to put them out, but to throw them out'. She vividly describes the fight between Maurice and Clésinger in which their scenes culminated:

We have been at one another's throats; my son-in-law raised a hammer against Maurice, and would perhaps have killed him if I had not thrown myself between them, hitting my son-in-law in the face and receiving a blow from his fist in my chest. If the priest, who happened to be there, and some friends and a servant had not intervened by force, Maurice, armed with a pistol, would have killed him on the spot. Solange fanned the flames with ferocious coldness, having been the cause of this deplorable madness with her silly talk, her lies and unimaginable baseness.

She says that neither Maurice nor anyone else had given Solange the least cause for such behaviour, and that she and her husband are never to set foot in the house again. 'They have gone too far. *Mon Dieu*, I have done nothing to deserve such a daughter.' She begs Mlle de Rozières not to mention this to Chopin, for he is to know as little as possible about it. 'I have been obliged to write telling him part of all this; I was afraid he might arrive in the middle of a scene and that he would die of the pain and the shock.'

Immediately on her return to Paris Solange went to Chopin, obviously with the intention of gaining his sympathy and support in the quarrel with her mother. There is a short letter, undated, from Chopin to Solange, undoubtedly written during that summer, which Opienski cites as the direct cause of the rupture.

I am much grieved to know that you are ill. I hasten to place my carriage at your service. I have written to this effect to your mother. Take care of yourself. Your old friend, CH.

Evidently Solange's ruse was successful, for in a letter on July 25 Madame Sand complains to Mlle de Rozières that she

has had no news of Chopin for several days. She is afraid that he may be ill, but she has a horror of going to Paris and exposing herself to the hatred of her daughter. But once again she consoles herself, this time by saying that she would much rather sulkiness were the cause of his silence than illness.

Between the first two letters of this series to Mlle de Rozières, George Sand wrote a letter to Chopin to which he often referred as 'the famous letter'. It is unfortunate that neither this letter nor Chopin's answer to it has been preserved. The only comment upon its contents that is available is an entry in the journal of Delacroix. This is dated July 20, 1847.

Received in the morning the letter in which Mme Sand tells me of her quarrel with her daughter. Chopin came in the morning. . . . He spoke to me of the letter he had received, and he has since read me almost the whole of it. I must admit that it is atrocious. Cruel passions and long pent-up impatience come to light; and, by way of a contrast, which would be amusing if the subject were not so sad, the author from time to time takes the place of the woman and spreads herself in tirades which seem borrowed from a novel or a philosophical homily.

This is rather damning evidence of George Sand's duplicity, because, as we have seen in her letter to Mlle de Rozières just quoted, she expresses the greatest solicitude about Chopin's well-being and gives no hint of having written to him in an unfriendly manner.

In her next letter to Mlle de Rozières she says that she has just heard from Chopin.

I see that, as usual, I have been the dupe of my stupid heart and that while I spent six sleepless nights worrying about his health, he was busy speaking and thinking ill of me with the Clésingers. Very well. . . . But I see clearly at last and I shall behave accordingly; I shall no longer allow my flesh and blood to be a pasture ground for ingratitude and perversity. From henceforward I shall remain peaceably entrenched at Nohant far from the implacable enemies who are after me. . . . Very good! When they have satiated their hatred of me, they will devour each other.

. . . I think Chopin is *magnificent* to see, associate with, and

approve of Clésinger who *struck* me, because I wrested from his hands a hammer that he had raised against Maurice. Chopin, whom everyone told me was my most faithful and devoted friend! Admirable! . . . I believe in God and in the immortality of my soul. The more I suffer in this world, the more I believe. I shall abandon this transitory life with a profound disgust, to enter with a great confidence into the life eternal.

(Nothing we have learnt hitherto about George Sand could have led us to suppose that her self-confidence in the next world would be any less than it had been in this.)

On August 14 she wrote to Mlle de Rozières the last letter of this series.

I am more seriously ill than people think. Thank God! for I have had enough of life and am packing up with great pleasure. I do not ask you for news of Solange; I have it indirectly. As for Chopin, I hear no more of him at all, and I beg you to tell me *truthfully* how he is; nothing further. The rest does not interest me in the least, and I have no cause to miss his affection.

The outcome of this resignation was her *Histoire de ma Vie*, perhaps the one work of hers which will survive. She imagined that the others were enjoying their cabal against her. Her pride was stung by Chopin's apparent ingratitude for the eight long years of care and nursing that she had devoted to him. This provided her with the requisite material for the last part of her strange autobiography, and allowed her to shift the blame on to the shoulders of others and emerge a much-wronged woman. It was beyond her comprehension that Chopin would be more helpless than ever without her ministrations, that he considered his life broken, that he regarded his creative work as finished now that he was debarred from Nohant. Thus we have the two chief protagonists both suffering from the same complaint – both centred in their own troubles, both wallowing in their misery. Yet it is interesting to note that as early as 1840 Marie d'Agoult had written to Liszt:

I think that *le ménage Chopin* cannot fail to break up soon. The mutual friends make him out to be a jealous invalid, a man driven to death by passion, who torments himself and torments

others. She has had enough of it, and is only afraid that he will die at once if she leaves him.

Solange and Chopin continued to correspond regularly. In each of his letters we find warm expressions of friendship and fond greetings to her husband. The girl had not only won Chopin over to her side but had made him sympathetically inclined towards the sculptor. Solange, after visiting her father and then her husband's parents at Besançon, had gone to stay with a cousin at La Châtre, quite close to Nohant. On hearing of her daughter's proximity Madame Sand sent a message requesting a meeting. Twice did Solange visit her old home, without her husband of course, but on neither occasion was she warmly received. Chopin enlightens us on this in his letter to Solange on November 24.

Every morning for the last fifteen days I begin to write, to tell you how sad I am at the outcome of your two visits to Nohant. But the first step is made; you have shown affection, and there is a certain drawing together, since you have been asked to write. Time will do the rest. Also, you know that one must not take too literally everything that people say; and, even if, for example, she will not any longer *know* a foreigner like me, it can scarcely be the same with your husband, who has become a member of the family. . . . I choke; I have a headache, and I beg your pardon for my erasures and for my French. Give me a good handshake, you and your husband too. May God keep you. Your devoted CH.

We must not forget that Solange was a born mischief-maker, that she loved meddling in other people's affairs; in fact her word, like that of her mother, could not be believed. It has freely been said that Chopin was attracted by her, and for this reason preferred to take her part. But this was not the reason at the moment. He could not understand family dissensions, for in his own family life he had never known discord. His disappointment in George Sand's treatment of her daughter was just as great as George Sand's disappointment in his supposed treachery. To prove that there was no treason in Chopin's behaviour let us examine a letter from Louis Viardot to George

Sand written from Dresden on December 19, 1847. He says that he had just passed through Paris and had seen Chopin, and continues:

I must, in the interests of justice and truth, tell you that the enmity with which you believe he ungratefully pursues you did not show itself, at least with us, in a single word or a single gesture. Here in all frankness is a *résumé* of the sense of everything he said to us: 'The marriage of Solange is a great misfortune for her, for her family, for her friends. Both mother and daughter have been deceived, and the mistake has been recognized too late. But this error was shared by both of them; why should only one be blamed for it? The daughter wished for and insisted upon an unsuitable marriage; but, in consenting, did not the mother share in the mistake? With her great intelligence and experience should she not have enlightened a young girl who was influenced more by spite than by love? If she were under an illusion, she should not be pitiless over an error which she shared. And I,' he added, 'pity them both with all my heart. I try to bring some consolation to the only one of them whom I am allowed to see.'

This is an important letter and shows us why Chopin chose to defend the daughter against the mother. Yet George Sand refused to ask his counsel in family matters, though he obviously had more perspicacity than any of them. Karénine has not included this letter in her voluminous *Life*, perhaps because it shows Chopin in a better light than her heroine.

In his letter to his sister Louise written at Christmas Frédéric poignantly refers many times to the painful incidents. Characteristically he had begun the letter more than once before summoning up the courage to finish it. He tells Louise of Solange's visits to Nohant and her cold reception there, and of how her brother chose to play with her dog rather than speak to her.

The Mother appears to be more bitter against her son-in-law than against her daughter; yet in the famous letter to me [unfortunately destroyed] she wrote that her son-in-law is not bad; it is only her daughter who makes him so. It seems as if she wanted, at one stroke, to get rid of her daughter and of me,

because we were inconvenient; she will correspond with her daughter; so her maternal heart, which cannot do without some news of her child, will be quieted, and with that she can stifle her conscience. She will believe that she is just, and will pronounce me an enemy for having taken the side of her son-in-law (whom she cannot endure only because he has married her daughter; and I did all I could to prevent the marriage). A strange creature, with all her intellect! Some kind of frenzy has come upon her; she harrows up her own life, she harrows up her daughter's life; with her son too it will end badly; I predict it and could swear to it. For her own justification she longs to find something against those who care for her, who have never done her any discourtesy, but whom she cannot bear to see about her, because they are the mirrors of her conscience. Thus, to me she has not written one word more, she will not come to Paris this winter, nor has she mentioned me at all to her daughter. I do not regret that I helped her through the eight most difficult years of her life: the years when her daughter was growing up and her son living with his mother; I do not regret what I have suffered; but I am sorry that the daughter, that carefully over-cultivated plant, sheltered from so many storms, has been broken in her mother's hand by a carelessness and levity, pardonable perhaps in a woman in her twenties, but not in one in her forties. What has been and no longer is, leaves no trace in the register. When, some day, Mme S. thinks the matter over she can have only kind memories of me in her soul. Meanwhile she is now in the strangest paroxysm of motherhood, playing the part of a juster and better mother than she really is; and that is a fever for which there is no remedy in the case of heads with such an imagination, when they have entered into such a quagmire. For the rest:—'even cypresses have their caprices.' [Quotation from an old *Polonaise*.]

The only other item of interest in the letter was that Grzymala had been swindled out of his fortune.

This long quotation is of paramount importance. Chopin was not in the habit of discussing his friends or of remarking on their idiosyncrasies, but his feelings could no longer be bottled up. Louise had always been his confidante; she had also been to Nohant, knew of the relationship and had corresponded with Madame Sand; therefore it was only natural that she should be chosen. He certainly appears to have diagnosed George Sand's

peculiarities and to have understood her attitude, though he will not allow his family to think that he is distressed. However much he suffered, however much he may have complained to others, he endeavoured to his utmost to maintain a brave face to them.

On New Year's Eve he wrote to Solange prophesying that everything would come right in the end. He had heard that she was pregnant and was certain that the grandmother's heart would be softened with 'the little angel that is coming into the world'. Instead of a letter of nine lines her mother will soon be writing one of ninety. He speaks of his cough and his choking, but says that his time is entirely taken up with lessons. How he must have been glad to see the end of that unhappy year! Nothing had gone right. Quarrels and misunderstandings had ended in severing the only friendship in the world that mattered to him. He was desolate, and could not see any ray of hope. His faith in life was almost extinct.

## CHAPTER XXII

### PARIS - LONDON

1848

*Lucrezia Floriani* was written during 1846. It began to appear in serial form in *Le Courrier français* on June 25 of that year, and was published in book form the following year. Chopin had read it chapter by chapter as it was written and had nothing but admiration for it; but the more sophisticated of its readers were not so blind. They quickly divined the motive of its author: *Lucrezia* was the author herself; Prince Karol, Chopin. Very soon these assertions became public property and George Sand found herself forced vehemently to deny them. Later, she tried to prove her innocence in her most persuasive manner in the *Histoire de ma Vie*, her defence being that the book was only a novel and that the characters in it were pure invention. But we know George Sand by now, and particularly the regularity with which she used her friends and acquaintances as copy for her characters. She had used these means before, she continued to use them afterwards, and the world has not been convinced by her explanations. However much we should like to be influenced by her pleadings or by the superlative efforts of her indefatigable biographer we are still of the opinion that Chopin's chief peculiarities are portrayed in Prince Karol. Possibly the intention was not malicious, nor the book conceived as a lever to force the cleavage that she foresaw was to widen between them - the true reason for this has been exposed in the preceding chapter - but the likeness drawn is too close to be overlooked.

Prince Karol was an exquisite. He was slender in body, dainty in his tastes, fastidious in his desires, possessed of charm and beauty: he could be tender or severe, chaste or passionate. *Lucrezia* was an actress and a courtesan, elevated, sympathetic and fond of posing as pure. Not content with her success and position she became an author or part-author of plays. She had numerous friends, had had innumerable lovers, but after fifteen

years of gaiety and fame had resolved to become a saviour and protectress of young men. She had renounced love, and when she met Karol only wished to care for and mother him. This unnaturalness was enigmatical to the young adorer. He was annoyed at her callousness, angry with her heartlessness, rude to her friends, jealous of her good health, rather like Balzac's Calyste. This attitude had its reaction, and Lucrezia in turn became the adoring one. After a while Karol's admiration diminished, and she languished and died from his neglect and abandonment.

It is significant that Karol is made out to be jealous of almost everyone: the priest, the beggar, the servant, the pedlar, the doctor, the fishermen, the children. Was this a reflection on Chopin? George Sand may have had pleasure in mentioning his predilection for attractive women, but, in comparison with her past glaring infidelities, she had little to complain of; her self-esteem effectively protected her from jealousy. Whatever it was in Chopin that caused her to tire of him it was not doubt of his love. He was a sentimentalist; as such he could withstand adversity and suffering, and was even willing to overlook her inconstancy. Liszt quotes from *Lucrezia*: 'He could arrive at a new phase – that of woe; but he could never reach the phase of coldness. That would indeed have been a phase of physical agony; his love was his life; and whether it was sweet or bitter, he could not for one moment withdraw himself from its dominion.'

It is quite clear that Chopin was not aware of the allusion to himself in the book, and that it was his friends who stirred up the later bitterness which caused him to curse 'Lucrezia' in one of his letters from Scotland. Karol and Chopin may not resemble each other to the minutest degree, nor is their life-history similar – few novelists would be so foolish as to draw an exact picture of any well-known living person – but that the artist was used as material for her unstoppable pen is beyond doubt. It is said that Chopin was asked by the Sand children if he had read *Lucrezia*: 'Mamma has put you in it'. The verification of this is obscure. Heine had no illusions about George Sand: 'She has outrageously maltreated my friend Chopin in a detestable romance divinely written.' One thing is certain –

Lucrezia herself is a superb study of the authoress. Every action is a magnificent gesture; all her arguments are precisely those that are made use of in *Ma Vie*; all her pure intentions were misconstrued, all her thoughtful actions towards the men she loved were misunderstood by them and used against her. George Sand knew that she had wronged Chopin, and though she was tormented by the thought of her behaviour she would not admit that the fault was hers. That she was suffering can be seen from a letter to M. Charles Poncy on December 14, 1847:

You and Désirée [his wife] have understood that I was passing through the gravest and most grievous phase in my life. I nearly succumbed, although I had long foreseen it. . . . To this manifestation of the unfortunate germs which were silently growing, were added divers very bitter and quite unexpected accessory circumstances. Indeed, my soul and body have both been grievously afflicted. I believe my grief to be incurable; for the more I succeed in distracting myself at certain times, the more it returns to me dark and poignant in the hours that follow. . . . I myself have undertaken a rather heavy work entitled *Histoire de ma Vie*. It is a series of reminiscences, professions of faith and meditations in a form whose details will show a little poetry and much simplicity. I shall not, however, reveal all my life. I do not admire the pride and cynicism of confessions, and I do not see that we ought to disclose all the mysteries of our hearts to men more wicked than ourselves and consequently disposed to find in them a bad lesson instead of a good one.

George Sand did not wilt away, however, nor was her grief incurable. The revolution in Paris which began on February 23, 1848, became the prescribed tonic for her cure. For some years she had earnestly hoped for the downfall of Louis-Philippe and the return of the Republic, and the sudden outbreak after the prohibition of the journalists' banquet the previous evening filled her heart with joy and occupied all her thoughts. On March 9, 1848, she writes again to M. Poncy, but enthusiasm has taken the place of despondency. 'All my physical sufferings, all my private troubles, are forgotten. I am full of life, strength, and activity; I feel as though I were only twenty years of age.'

She was able to banish her sorrow, obliterate the sufferings of others from her mind. Once again she was the woman of action, – everything and everybody apart from her ambitious schemes was cast aside. But the desperate and forlorn figure in Paris who had shared her life for eight years could not forget.

On February 10, 1848, Chopin wrote a heartfelt letter to Louise, in which he says:

Madame Sand is still in the country. . . . She has not written one word to me any more, and I don't write either. She has told the landlord to let her apartment here. . . . She has forgotten herself, is doing crazy things, and will not come to her senses till her heart begins to ache badly; at present it is dominated by her head. I have had my cross to carry. May God pity her, if she can't distinguish between genuine affection and flattery. And yet perhaps it only appears to me that others are flatterers, and perhaps her happiness is really there, where I can't see it. Her friends, her neighbours have long understood nothing of what was happening there of late; but now perhaps they are accustomed. For the rest, no one will ever be able to steer through the caprices of such a mind. Eight years of any settled arrangement was too much. God willed just those to be, the years in which her children were growing up, and if I had not been there, I don't know how long ago the children would have been with their father, not with her. Maurice, too, will run away to his father at the first opportunity. But perhaps, after all, those are the conditions of her life, of her literary talent, of her happiness? Don't let it worry you, for it's all long over. Time is a great physician. I have not managed to get over it yet. That is why I don't write to you, for what I begin, I burn. There's no use in writing! Or better nothing; only that we have not met for a long time, without any quarrels or scenes, and that I could not go there, on the terms of keeping silence about her daughter.

In this same letter he speaks of his forthcoming concert:

Pleyel, Perthuis, Leo and Albrecht have persuaded me to give a concert. All places have been sold out for a week. I shall give it in the Pleyel salon on the 16th of this month. Only 300

tickets, at 20 francs. I shall have the fashionable world of Paris. The King has taken 10, the Queen 10, the Duchess of Orleans 10, the Duke of Montpensier 10, though the Court is in mourning and none of them will come. They want to attend a second concert, which I probably shall not give, for even this one bores me.

Excitement over this concert was greater than over any of the previous ones. Chopin had not played in public for six years, which may have partly accounted for the interest it was arousing. The chief factor for its ultimate financial success rested in the untiring efforts of his friends and in their excellent organizing, for they were well aware of Chopin's empty pocket. Although he was still giving lessons he was too fatigued to take more than a minimum of pupils. It was impossible for him to compose away from Nohant, and what manuscripts he had he did not think worthy of publication, so that any hope of revenue from this source had to be discounted. Royalties were not paid to composers one hundred years ago. All the previous summer he had perforce had to remain in Paris on his own resources, which were even slenderer now than of late years. We do not know of any financial arrangements which may have existed between Chopin and George Sand – probably there were none – but now he knew that he must earn more than before, feeble as he was. He loathed exposing his talent to the world, but he realized all too forcibly that he had no option. The effort had to be made. He imagined that after the initial discomfiture it would be easier, and that a few such recitals each year would amply suffice for his wants. Therefore he mustered all his energy for this effort, as if it were his last remaining hope.

The concert was a grand affair from every point of view. The audience could not have been more distinguished, for it had been specially selected from an invited list of subscribers; the tickets, at a *louis* apiece, were beautifully engraved in English script; the room and the platform were carpeted and bedecked with flowers. Everything possible was thought of to make the occasion delightful, in order both to do homage to the genius who showed himself so rarely and to allow the artist to feel he

was playing in a drawing-room to friends. Here is the programme:

## PREMIÈRE PARTIE

*Trio* de Mozart, pour piano, violon et violoncelle,  
par MM. Chopin, Alard et Franchomme.

*Airs*, chantés par Mlle Antonia Molina di Mondì.

*Nocturne* } composés et joués par M. Chopin.  
*Barcarolle* }

*Air* – chanté par Mlle Antonia Molina di Mondì.

*Étude* } composées et jouées par M. Chopin.  
*Berceuse* }

## SECONDE PARTIE

*Scherzo*, *Adagio* et *Finale* de la *Sonate* en sol mineur  
pour piano et violoncelle, composée par

M. Chopin et jouée par l'auteur  
et M. Franchomme.

*Air nouveau* de *Robert le Diable*, de Meyerbeer, chanté  
par M. Roger.

*Préludes* } composés et joués par M. Chopin.  
*Mazurkas* }  
*Valse* }

Accompagnateurs : MM. Aulary et de Garaudé.

When Chopin appeared on the platform he astonished his friends by the erectness of his walk and the ease of his carriage. Although so weak he was able to assume the airs of a professional pianist and produce the illusion of fitness. His face was ghastly pale, however, and the extreme quietness of his playing betrayed his frailty. He did not spare himself, playing throughout with all the nervous energy and physical strength he could command. But the effort was almost too much for him: he nearly fainted at the close.

Various accounts of the concert have been preserved. The *Gazette musicale* was wonderfully eulogistic. After describing the brilliance of the *soirée* and the aristocratic assemblage, and

remarking on the favour bestowed on the fortunate holders of tickets, the critic proceeds:

The sylph has kept his word, and with what success, what enthusiasm! It is easier to tell of the welcome he received, of the transports he excited, than to describe, to analyse, to divulge the mysteries of an execution that has no analogy in our terrestrial sphere. . . . We know nobody who can interpret Chopin except Chopin himself: all those who were present on Wednesday are equally convinced of this.

After mentioning various items on the programme, the critic adds:

Do not ask how all these masterpieces, great and small, were performed. We said to begin with that we must give up the idea of reproducing the thousands and thousands of nuances of an exceptional genius, having at its service a technique of equal merit. We will only say that the charm did not cease to work upon the audience for a single instant, and that the effect endured after the concert was finished.

The most striking impression gained of his playing at this concert appears to have been his remarkable *pianissimi*; they were softer than ever. Instead of bringing his climaxes up to a *forte* or *fortissimo* – a physical impossibility for him – he graded them down to the most minute tone possible. His gradations of *piano* tone had always been things of joy, inimitable nuances had always characterized his playing; but he seems to have perfected this art to a much finer degree, as if determined to make up in spirituality for what he lacked in power. The passionate outbursts in the *Barcarolle* became moments of exquisite fragrance; the *Berceuse* must have been the acme of tenderness, the *Valse in D flat*, Op. 64, No. 1, which was encored, a minute of rippling laughter. We do not know which Nocturne or Étude he played, or the particular Mazurkas and Preludes, but we do know of the enthusiasm of the fortunate public. A demand was made for a second concert, and a date, March 10, chosen; and 600 names were written down to be selected from. But the revolution intervened. Concerts, especially social events

like these, were out of the question. This concert was Chopin's last appearance in Paris, the city he had adopted for his home, the city which he loved and where he had been happiest. The coming of the revolution changed the rest of his short life. Had he remained in Paris his admirers might have made his living secure, and this might have helped to prolong his life a little. The anxiety of his existence in England, on the other hand, with his loneliness there, the fogs of London and the cold winds of Scotland, was fatally disheartening and discouraging.

Solange Clésinger gave birth to a daughter on February 28, whilst staying with her father at Guillery. Chopin wrote to her on March 3 congratulating her:

The arrival of your little daughter has given me, as you may suppose, more joy than the arrival of the republic. . . . Paris is quiet, from fear. Everyone is enrolled. Everyone is in the national guard. The shops are open, but no buyers. The foreigners are waiting with their passports for the ruined railways to be repaired.

Two days later he wrote again to Solange:

Yesterday I went to Madame Marliani, and as I left, I met your Mother in the doorway of the vestibule. . . . I said good-day to your Mother, and my second phrase was: had she had any news of you lately. — 'A week ago,' she replied. — 'You have heard nothing yesterday, or the day before?' — 'No.' — 'Then I can tell you that you are a grandmother; Solange has a daughter, and I am very glad that I am able to be the first to give you this news.' I bowed and went downstairs. . . . I asked Combes [an Abyssinian who was with him] to go up again, as I could not manage the stairs, and tell her that you are *going on well*, and the child too. I was waiting for the Abyssinian at the bottom of the stairs when your Mother came down with him and put to me, with much interest, some questions about your health. I answered that you had written me a few words, *yourself, in pencil*, the day after the birth of your child, that you have suffered much, but that the sight of your little daughter has made you forget everything. She asked me whether your husband was with you, and I replied that the address of your letter appeared to me to be in his handwriting. She asked me how I

am; I replied that I am well, and asked the *conciërge* to open the door. I bowed, and found myself in the Square d'Orléans on foot, escorted by the Abyssinian. . . . I thought her looking well. I suppose that she is happy in the triumph of republican ideas, and that the news which I gave her yesterday still further increases her joy.

Thus ends the comradeship of George Sand and Chopin. They never saw each other again. Painful as the moment must have been to the rejected lover, his pride was equal to the occasion.

Whatever the judgement of the world since may be on George Sand's conduct, every credit must be given to her for her countless kindnesses, and for the stimulation of her companionship. Unquestionably the trip to Majorca was a misfortune, but that was sheer bad luck. From 1838 onwards Chopin's life hung on a thread, but he would never have lingered on for another eleven years had it not been for her devotion and superhuman care. She taught him how to look after himself, made him wrap up and protect himself, saw that he took his medicines, insisted on his going early to bed. The moment he felt that he was discarded he forsook his precautions and his health rapidly declined. Someone had to look after him, for he was as helpless as a baby, and he knew that no one else could take her place. For prolonging his life we are grateful to her. But this is not the only reason for gratitude. If we glance at his compositions we can see that their quality and texture reach a loftier and nobler plane, that their emotional appeal is much grander, that their finish denotes a higher degree of craftsmanship. To her influence and that of her circle, intellectually and emotionally, must have been due much of this enormous artistic development.

Solange's infant did not live a week; it was buried on March 7. On March 11 Chopin wrote to the distracted mother imploring her to be courageous and calm.

Take care of yourself for those who are left. . . . Try to be *calm*, then, for pity's sake *try to be calm*; with the good care you will have from your father and Luce . . . your health will return and a new happiness will begin. I am told that your Mother

has left Paris. . . . She is much to be pitied; I feel sure that it is a great blow to her, and I have no doubt that she will do all she can for you. *Courage*, then, and *calmness*. I leave all condolences aside, they seem poor things in the presence of great sorrows.

This sad loss had one recompense – it opened up the way for a reconciliation between mother and daughter. When Solange returned to Paris as soon as she was well she met her mother, and gradually the past was forgotten. The Clésingers had financial trouble which nearly caused a separation. This was tidied over, but eventually they agreed to live apart.

The revolution of 1848 was not confined to France alone. Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, in fact almost the whole of Europe was in a state of unrest. The more prominent of the Polish exiles, most of whom had taken refuge in France, thought the moment propitious to stage a rising in the German and Austrian provinces of their beloved country. But the attempts made were purely abortive and were easily quelled. Chopin's patriotism was roused. Several of his friends had already gone back, Czartoryski being the chief inspiring force. On April 4 Chopin writes to Fontana, who is in America, begging him not to go until 'something really certain begins at home'; he informs him of various political moves and hints at the possibility of a united Poland once again.

However impatient we may be, let us wait till the cards have been well shuffled, that we may not waste our strength, which will be so needed at the right moment. That moment is near, but it is not to-day. Perhaps in a month, perhaps in a year. All here are convinced that our affairs will be decided before autumn.

We know that the foundations of such hopes were of the flimsiest.

Once the revolution had started in Paris Chopin realized that all avenues for making a livelihood were closed to him. England seemed the only peaceful country. Should he follow Louis-Philippe there and try his fortune? He knew that his compositions were well known and in favour, that his fame had preceded him; but he had to reckon with that indecisive nature of his. Fortunately, so it seemed at the time, his mind was

made up for him. A Scottish pupil, Jane Wilhelmina Stirling, was the compelling force. She arranged everything in advance, saw to his travelling comforts, and engaged rooms for him. He arrived in London on the evening of April 20, the day before Good Friday, and went straight to 10 Bentinck Street, moving after a few days to 48 Dover Street.

Chopin was not happy for the first two weeks. He tells Franchomme in a letter of May 1 from 48 Dover Street that 'At last I have a large and fine room, in which I can breathe and play, and where to-day, for the first time, the sun has paid me a visit. This morning I am breathing a little better, but the whole of this last week I have not felt too well'. In a letter to Gutmann on May 6, from the same address (for he had decided to retain these rooms) he speaks of having three pianofortes in his room, an Erard, a Pleyel, and a Broadwood. 'But what is the use when I have not the time to play on them?' He is too busy making social calls and new acquaintances. He heard Jenny Lind in *Sonnambula*, has had a welcome visit from Pauline Viardot, and was asked to play at a Philharmonic concert - 'I would rather not; . . . they want classical things there.' But he admits he must be heard. 'If I play before the Queen, I shall have to give a morning recital in a private house with admission limited to a certain number of persons. That, at least, is what I should like.' Five days later he tells Grzymala that he has been to the Italian Opera and heard Jenny Lind. 'The Queen showed herself for the first time since the Chartists. Both produced a great effect, - and, on me, so did old Wellington, who sat underneath the Queen's box, like an old monarchical dog in his kennel, under his crowned Lady.' Chopin had not lost his love for fine singing and was enraptured with Jenny Lind's art. 'She sings with extreme purity and certainty, and her piano notes are steady, and as even as a hair.' He contemptuously added that a stall cost 2½ guineas. Why should we grumble at current Covent Garden prices?

In another letter to the same friend, May 13, he appears annoyed with his landlord for demanding double the rent for his room, for which he already pays 26 guineas a month. 'Nothing was in writing, so he is free to raise his price.' Chopin is enjoying the Opera at the two rival theatres, Covent Garden



**JANE STIRLING**  
**Portrait by Deveria**

*[Collection Edouard Ganche]*



and Haymarket, and continues to be enthusiastic over Jenny Lind, both as woman and artist. The Duchess of Sutherland has promised to present him to the Queen. 'If the Queen and Prince Albert, who know about me, should be pleased, it will be good, for I shall begin from the top.' His remarks about the Philharmonic Society make amusing reading:

I don't want to play there because it would be with the orchestra. . . . There one must play Beethoven, Mozart or Mendelssohn, and although the directors and others tell me that my concertos have already been played there, and with success, I prefer not to try, for it may come to nothing. The orchestra is like their roast beef or their turtle soup; excellent, strong, but nothing more. All that I have written is needless as an excuse; there is one impossible thing: they never rehearse, for everyone's time is dear nowadays; there is only one rehearsal, and that is public.

Invitations poured in. The society women in London appeared as determined to lionize him as those of Paris. But he quickly found out that most of them were mean, that they would not pay him his fee, that they preferred giving balls or 'vocal parties'.

The Duke of Westminster is close-fisted, so they don't pay. . . . Old Lady Rothschild asked me how much I *charge*, because some lady who had heard me had asked her about it. As Lady [*sic*] Sutherland had given me 20 guineas, and as Broadwood, on whose piano I play, had suggested that price, I answered: 20 guineas. The good lady, obviously kind, thereupon told me that it is true I play very well, but that she advises me to take less, as moderation is necessary this season.

He has already played before the Queen and her Prince Consort at the Duchess of Sutherland's, but complains that the Court is in mourning for some aunt and so he cannot expect an invitation there. 'If I could have a few days without blood-spitting, if I were younger, if I were not prostrate under my affections as I am, I might be able to start life again.' Chopin could see himself quickly established as a favourite in London,

but he knew he was physically unequal to the strain. Whenever he was not dining out in society he would dine with his 'kind Scottish ladies', but he found their 'jigging about round London with visiting-cards' too much. 'I'm only half alive.'

Though he has a few pupils at a guinea per lesson he is finding it difficult to save any money.

I see that people are not so open-handed here, and that difficulties over money exist everywhere. For the bourgeois class one must do something startling, mechanical, of which I am not capable. The upper world, which travels, is proud, but cultivated, and just, when they are minded to examine anything; but so much distracted by thousands of things, so surrounded by the boredom of conventionalities, that it is all one to them whether music is good or bad, since they have to hear it from morning till night. For here they have flower-shows with music, dinners with music, sales with music: Savoyards, Bohemians, swarms of my colleagues, and all mixed up.

Chopin may not have been a great letter-writer, but he is extraordinarily apt at diagnosing fashions and bad habits, and has a sane philosophic outlook on general affairs.

On July 7 he gave a second *matinée* at Lord Falmouth's house,

but I don't know whether I made 100 guineas. . . . The season here is finishing. I don't know how my plans will turn out. I have not much savings in my pocket, and don't know what I shall do. I may go to Scotland. My Scottish ladies are kind and lovable, but sometimes they bore me horribly. . . . My health varies from hour to hour; but often in the mornings it seems as if I must cough my life out. I'm depressed in spirit, but my head gets muddled; I even avoid solitude, so as not to think, for I must not be ill long here, and want to avoid getting feverish.

Later on in this letter to Grzymala he inquires after Madame Sand. He wants news of her and of Solange. 'Madame S., I know, wrote to Viardot to inquire *anxiously* about me!!! What a part she must be playing there; the just *mother*.'

At the close of the season Chopin can only 'scrape together'

about 200 guineas (5,000 francs), and is worried over his affairs.

Some newspapers have made a fuss of me, and people say that counts for a lot here. But what are not so plentiful as they say, are guineas. There's a great deal of lying; directly they don't want anything, they have gone into the country. One lady pupil of mine has gone into the country without paying for nine lessons; and others, who are supposed to take two lessons a week, usually miss both; so there is more pretence than fact. . . . Lady Peel, for instance, wants me to give lessons to her daughter, who has a great deal of ability, but, as she has had a teacher who took half-a-guinea twice a week, she wants me to give only one lesson a week, so that the effect on her purse shall be the same. This is to be able to say that she is having lessons from me; and she will probably leave town in two weeks.

These monetary troubles are getting on his nerves. He admits his depression, that he has no heart for anything. 'My Scottish ladies are kind, but they bore me so that I don't know what to do.' He cannot find any comfort, he is worn out and can 'only vegetate and wait for it to end soon'.

Lord Torphichen, a brother-in-law of Miss Stirling, had invited Chopin to stay at Calder House, his country seat in Midlothian, twelve miles from Edinburgh. Other invitations to Scotland had been sent to him, but he had not the strength to flit from place to place – 'that kind of life has disgusted me' –

I shall stay in Scotland till the 29th of August; for the 29th I have accepted an engagement in Manchester, where there will be a big concert. I am to play twice, without the orchestra, and they are giving me 60 pounds. Alboni is coming – but I don't care about that – I shall just sit down and play. . . . What I shall do with myself after that, I don't know; if only I could be sure that I shan't be laid up here in winter by illness!

In a letter to his family written after reaching Scotland, Chopin gives a *résumé* of his chief activities in London. He gave two morning concerts, the first at the house of Mrs. Sartoris (she was Adelaide Kemble, the daughter of Charles and niece

of John Kemble, and sister of Fanny Kemble), the second at Lord Falmouth's. He speaks of Lord Falmouth as 'a great musical amateur; rich, unmarried, *grand seigneur*. . . . In the street you would offer him threepence, but in the house he keeps a crowd of servants, better dressed than himself.' At the first concert Mario sang three times, and at the second Pauline Viardot did likewise, Chopin himself appearing four times at each concert.

Such short and concise concerts were new to them; they have only long, 20-number concerts with huge announcements. . . . I limited the audience to 200 at Lord Falmouth's, and to 150 at Mrs. Sartoris's, which at a guinea a ticket (deducting various expenses) brought in just on 300 guineas.

He tells them that London is 'frightfully dear during the season' and that his lodgings alone cost 80 pounds. 'If I had not home lessons at a guinea, and several daily, I don't know what would have become of me.' At the Duchess of Sutherland's the Queen talked to him twice, which he was told happened rarely. He was most impressed with Stafford House.

All those who know say that the Queen of England has no such house. . . . The staircases are famous for their magnificence. They are neither in the entrance nor in the vestibule; but in the middle of the rooms, as if in some huge hall with most gorgeous paintings, statues, galleries, hangings, carpets; of the loveliest design with the loveliest perspective. On these stairs one could see the Queen, under a brilliant light, surrounded by all sorts of bediamonded and beribboned people with the garter, and all descending with the utmost elegance, carrying on conversations, lingering on various levels, where at every point there is some fresh thing to admire. It is true one regrets that some Paul Veronese could not see such a spectacle, so that he could have painted one more masterpiece.

He thinks that the reason he did not play at Buckingham Palace was because he did not apply for it:

Here you have to apply for everything, there is such a congestion of things. Not only did I not apply, but I did not call on

the court's *Kapellmeister*, or rather, the man who gets up concerts for the Queen, and conducts the Philharmonic Society's orchestra [Sir Michael Costa]. The Philharmonic Society invited me to play for them: a great favour, or rather honour; everyone who comes here tries for it, and this year neither Kalkbrenner nor Hallé played, in spite of much effort. But I refused, and this produced a bad impression among musicians, and especially among conductors. I refused once because I was not well; that was the reason I gave; but the real one was that I should only have had to play one of my concertos with the orchestra, and these gentlemen give only one rehearsal, and that in public, with entrance by free tickets. How can you rehearse, and repeat! So we should have played badly, although, apparently, they know my concertos, and Mrs. Dulcken, a famous – hm! – pianist here, played one there last year.

With the exception of J. W. Davison, of *The Times* ('a creature of poor Mendelssohn's'), all the critics were good to him. 'Davison does not know me, and imagines, I am told, that I am an antagonist of Mendelssohn. It does not matter to me, only, you see, everywhere in the world people are actuated by something else than truth.'

Chopin mentions the names of many society leaders, some of whom had been his pupils either in London or in Paris, and talks of three parties where he was paid the miserable sum of 20 pounds for playing. Lady Byron is on 'friendly terms' with him. 'We converse like the goose with the sucking pig, she in English, I in French. I understand why she bored Byron.' The rest of the letter is all gossip for family consumption. Perhaps the writer knew his women-folk would enjoy hearing of their Frédéric mingling with all these bearers of wonderful names, perhaps it pleased his snobbishness to tell them; but it is rather odd and ridiculous to find this gentle and solitary and ailing genius admiring the magnificence of an evening party and writing with awe of the famous people present. He was probably the most terrified person there, the one looked on as the most insignificant; but the world will never forget his name or his music. Their fame rests only with their inheritance.

Chopin could not have chosen a more unfortunate time for his second and last visit to England. True to a tradition, which

has never been more noticeable than it is to-day, England was the dumping-ground of the foreign musician. The political upheavals in Europe had deprived many of the best-known artists of their accustomed engagements, and, though they never missed an opportunity of ridiculing either the character or the artistic taste of the English, they were not averse from exercising their art at the expense of their gullible hosts. Thalberg was engaged to give twelve recitals at the Italian Theatre; Charles Hallé had foreseen the growing troubles and had decided to settle in England; Kalkbrenner and Osborne were also giving concerts; the two rival Opera-houses had most of the leading singers in their casts, and Berlioz was in London most of the season. Chopin ought to have made a public appearance, for his fame was confined to the aristocratic few, but evidently his abhorrence for concert playing prevailed. This was a pity. Although his playing was more suitable for the drawing-room than for the concert-hall, it still would have appealed to many of the 'unmusical' English, besides winning the favour of the press. At first the critics were excited over his arrival in England, but his reluctance to show himself and his obvious preference for society functions gradually wore down their enthusiasm.

The principal critic to write against Chopin was the all-powerful Davison of *The Times*. Davison was a staunch Mendelssohnian, and possibly the reason of his attitude towards Chopin was that the latter refused on the score of nationality to sign his name on a letter of condolence to Mendelssohn's widow which some German artists in Paris were sending. In his younger days Davison was full of praise for the young Pole's compositions, but from 1836 onwards, after meeting Mendelssohn at Düsseldorf with Sterndale Bennett, he became such a rabid admirer of Mendelssohn that his early admiration for Chopin diminished. Writing of the *Four Mazurkas*, Op. 41, in the *Musical World* of October 28, 1841, he said: 'M. Frédéric Chopin has, by some means or other which we cannot divine, obtained an enormous reputation, a reputation but too often refused to composers of ten times his genius. M. Chopin is by no means a putter down of commonplaces; but he is, what by many would be esteemed worse, a dealer in the most absurd

and hyperbolical extravagances. . . . The entire works of Chopin present a motley surface of ranting hyperbole and excruciating cacophony. When he is not *thus* singular, he is no better than Strauss [Johann the elder] or any other waltz compounder.' This bad-tempered tirade continues, but we have sufficient for our purpose. Mr. Davison would probably be glad if he could reconsider his judgement to-day.

The more prominent musicians in London, on the other hand, together with many writers and artists, esteemed Chopin at his real worth. Sir Julius Benedict played one of the Mozart Sonatas for four hands with Chopin at an evening party and has written of 'the great pains Chopin insisted should be taken in rehearsing it', to ensure a perfect rendering. The pianoforte faculty of the Royal Academy of Music were convinced of his genius and taught and played his compositions. He missed meeting Thackeray at a dinner through illness, but he dined at the house of the historian George Grote; he met Dickens and Carlyle. Jane Carlyle, the wife of the great historian, wrote a letter to Miss Stirling enclosing some verses which a friend of hers had written in praise of Chopin. She deploras the fact that Chopin could neither talk nor understand English and asks Miss Stirling whether she is poet enough to translate the poem into French verse. She says that she prefers his music to all other, and wishes with all her heart that the barrier of language did not exist between them. Moscheles wrote to Chopin from Leipzig begging him to allow his daughter the pleasure of entertaining him, 'for I am not there to do you the honour of visiting you. She never ceases to study your works'. Chopin had numberless letters of introduction, most of which he must have presented, and he could not have been discouraged by his social reception. Had he been in ordinary health, or even not quite so desperately ill, his visit would have been an outstanding success; but the strain was too great, the tension too exhausting. He was a disappointed man when he left for Scotland seeking rest.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### SCOTLAND

1848

CHOPIN wrote to Franchomme on August 6 from Edinburgh, and finished the letter at Calder House on August 11. 'I left London a few days ago and made the journey to Edinburgh in 12 hours. After a day's rest in Edinburgh, I arrived at Calder House, the castle of Lord Torphichen, where I expect to stay till the end of the month and rest after my London labours.' He was looking forward to this rest, and had it been a complete one, extending only until the end of September, nothing could have been more beneficial, but, alas, it proved to be his death-warrant. In this letter he says 'I am weaker all the time, and still unable to bear this climate', but even this admission was absurdly mild. His dear Scotswomen thought they were advising him for the best – in reality they shortened his life. He was dying, and he knew he was dying, and he was beyond caring for himself; yet this coming winter might not have been his last had he enjoyed southern European sunshine instead of the desperate northerly and easterly winds of Scotland, particularly those of the East coast.

In this same letter he proceeds:

What to do with myself next, I don't know. But I do earnestly wish that somebody would give me to the end of my life an annual pension for not composing, for never having invented a tune *à la* Osborne or Sowinski (both of whom are my excellent friends, one Irish, the other my countryman). . . . Of musical ideas there can be no question; I am utterly out of the running, and make on myself the impression of an ass at a masquerade, or rather a fiddle's E string on a bass viol: astonished, tricked, knocked off my balance. . . . Here I have the utmost (material) peace, and spend my time on the beautiful Scottish songs; I should like to compose a little, and even could do so, if only to give pleasure to these kind ladies, Mrs. Erskine and Miss Stirling. I have a Broadwood pianoforte in my room, and in the

drawing-room is Miss Stirling's Pleyel; pens and paper also are not lacking.

But he composed nothing; he had no heart left for it. George Sand had deprived him of inspiration, and he missed Nohant. Fontana had just arrived in London from America and Chopin wanted to travel down so as to embrace him, but he was not well enough.

You are my old cembalo on which time and circumstance have played their dismal tremolo. Yes; *two old cembali*, – though you will object to such companionship. That is without prejudice to either beauty or virtue; *la table d'harmonie* is excellent, but the strings have snapped and some of the pegs are missing. . . . The worst is that we are the work of a fine instrument-maker: some Stradivarius *sui generis*, who is no longer here to repair us. We can't give out new notes under clumsy hands, and we choke down in ourselves all that which, for the want of an expert, no one can get out of us. For me, I scarcely breathe; *je suis tout prêt à crever*; and you are doubtless growing bald. . . .

He becomes retrospective and writes of friends and acquaintances who have died, including his best piano-tuner and the only bootmaker who could make him comfortable shoes.

That yellow fever has not carried you off, and jaundice me, is incomprehensible, – for both of us have been exposed to yellowness. . . . I dream now of home, now of Rome; now of joy, now of grief. Nobody plays as I like nowadays, and I have grown so *forbearing*, that I could listen to Sowinski's Oratorio, and not die. . . . What I have left is just a big nose and an *undeveloped* 4th finger.

Beneath the raillery is a hopelessness that is tragic. Life is immaterial to him – to exist is an unnecessary effort. Yet, in that very lengthy letter to his family of August 19, parts of which have already been quoted, he appears to find joy in his new environment. He calls Edinburgh 'exquisite,' but adds: 'People who constantly have beautiful things in front of their noses, always admire what is less fine, but unfamiliar; because they are not used to it.' He is amused at hearing a blind man

Gén. Vous donne du bonheur -  
Gardez moi votre amitié - je m'y  
anne toujours et toujours -

Votre bien dévoué de cœur

F. Chopin

Mon adresse actuelle chez

Lord Torgotrishchen

Calder House.

Mid-Caldes. Essex.

après le 25 du mois - chez Broaden

33, Great Ladbroke Street, Golden Sq.

15 Août 1848.

Très cher Ami, Avant mon départ  
pour l'Essex où je compte passer

tranquillément - (si c'est possible)

quelques semaines - je vous envoie

un petit bout de lettre, de Londres,

en vous enlevant le 80 [ que j'ai

nom de Lady Trotter pour l'être-pieu:

Monsieur de Mikulowski qui a bien

voulu se charger de vous porter cette

lettre est un jeune signeur bien

aimable. Ami de Kozian - adieu

à madame

et j'espère qu'il a réussi à Paris.  
 J'aime tant de plaisir de  
 l'entendre parler de bras et d'épaules  
 par lui comment vous allez -  
 Quant à moi, j'étoffe dans ce  
 beau pays d'Essex, - pour changer  
 l'enroulement d'une pareille minuscule,  
 avec des bras séculaires, -  
 - Hamptoncourt où es-tu ? -  
 Le château que j'habite est un  
 vieux manoir ou John Knox  
 le réformateur nous a fait sa  
 première cène. Il y a ici des  
 murs de 8 pieds d'épaisseur -  
 des corridors interminables pleins  
 des vieux portraits d'amis

plus nous et plus écossais les  
 uns que les autres - rien n'y  
 manque - il y a même un certain  
 bonnet rouge que s'y montre -  
 Depuis tout ce que s'est passé  
 sur le continent j'éprouve qu'il  
 s'occupe à changer de coiffure pour  
 n'avoir pas de honte d'être enfoncé  
 avec les mauvais agents - car on  
 ne l'a pas vu de quelque temps...  
 Si vos bonnets rouges pouvaient  
 changer d'avis d'espion - j'espère  
 que votre campagne n'est pas haïe  
 par eux, - qu'elle est belle et  
 que vous y trouvez un peu de  
 repos après vos journées de Paris.

LETTER TO CAMILLE PLEYEL, FROM CALDER HOUSE, SCOTLAND, 15 AUGUST 1848

playing one of his mazurkas in a music-shop, and tells of a ghost that haunts Calder House. Everything is done to spoil him – ‘there is nothing I can think of that does not at once appear’, even to Parisian newspapers every day. In the evening he plays Scotch songs for the 70-year-old lord, who wishes him to come for the whole summer of the following year – ‘they would let me stay for the rest of my life; but what’s the use?’

For the first time he writes despondently to his people.

I don’t know how to turn round this winter. I have my lodging in Paris, as usual, but don’t know how to make ends meet. Many persons want me to stay in London for the winter, in spite of the climate. I want something else, but don’t myself know what. . . . If only London were not so dark and the people so heavy, and if there were no fogs or smells of soot, I would have learned English by now. But these English are so different from the French, to whom I have grown attached as to my own; they think only in terms of pounds; they like art because it is a luxury; kind-hearted, but so eccentric that I understand how one can himself grow stiff here, or turn into a machine. If I were younger, perhaps I would go in for a mechanical life, give concerts all over the place and succeed in a not unpleasant career (anything for money!); but now it is hard to start turning oneself into a machine.

How his summing-up of the English nature would be fitting to-day! To many, art is only a luxury. They do not think it worth an effort or the suffering of a privation. But it is a new phase to see Chopin writing like this to Poland. Hitherto he has been most guarded in his utterances to his family.

There is one person of whom Chopin writes in very grateful terms, Henry Fowler Broadwood, son of James Broadwood.

He is a very rich and highly cultivated man, whose father left the estate and the factory to him and himself settled down in the country. He has the very best connections; he had Guizot and all his family staying with him; and is beloved everywhere. I met Lord Falmouth through him. To give you an idea of his English courtesy: one morning he called on me; I was tired, and told him I had slept badly. At night I came back from lady [*sic*] Somerset’s, and found a new spring mattress and

pillows on my bed. . . . Mr. Broadwood had sent it and my valet was told not to tell me.

Henry Broadwood had purchased an extra seat in the carriage for the Edinburgh journey so that Chopin should not be crowded. Such actions as these lessened his dislike of the English people, but, notwithstanding all the kindnesses bestowed upon him everywhere, he deviated little from his lifelong aversion. As a youth in Poland he often expressed his hatred of the English, though how he came in contact with Englishmen sufficiently to create this antipathy is unexplainable. He found the Scottish people ugly, but good-natured, and thought their cows magnificent, 'but apparently inclined to gore people. The milk, butter, and eggs are irreproachable, and so are their usual companions, the cheeses and chickens.'

Miss Stirling, who appears to have taken complete charge of the invalid, had been a pupil of Chopin's pupil, Lindsay Sloper, in Paris. She expressed a wish to take lessons from Chopin himself, and Sloper made the necessary arrangements. This must have been before the summer of 1844, for we find her name on the title-page of the *Two Nocturnes*, Op. 55, which appeared in August of that year. Jane Stirling was six years older than Chopin, being born on July 15, 1804. She died in September 1859. Her sister, Mrs. Erskine – they were inseparable – was married in 1811 and became a widow in 1816, which would make her in 1848 not less than 55. Miss Stirling was obviously in love with Chopin – her wonderful generosity during his last days and her friendship with his family afterwards are sufficient grounds for such an assertion – but Chopin did not reciprocate her love. Niecks was told by Gutmann of a remark Chopin made to him one day. 'They have married me to Miss Stirling; she might as well marry death.' When Chopin got back to London in November he wrote to Grzymala apropos of the two Scotswomen:

They want me to stay, and go on dragging round the Scottish palaces, here and there and everywhere, as I am invited. They are kind, but so boring that the Lord preserve them! – Every day I get letters, and answer none of them; and wherever I go, they come after me if they can. Perhaps that has given

someone the notion that I am getting married; but there really has to be some kind of physical attraction, and the unmarried one is too much like me. How could you kiss yourself. – Friendship is all very well, but gives no right to anything further. I have made that clear –. Even if I could fall in love with someone, as I should be glad to do, still I would not marry, for we should have nothing to eat and nowhere to live. And a rich woman expects a rich man, or if a poor man, at least not a sickly one, but one who is young and handsome. It's bad enough to go to pieces alone, but two together, that is the greatest misfortune. I may peg out in a hospital, but I won't leave a starving wife behind me.

Intimate conversations must have taken place between them for Chopin to write like this. It is interesting to know that he would have liked to fall in love again, but we also glean that Miss Stirling was not physically attractive to him, although Ary Scheffer painted her several times because she embodied his ideal of female beauty. She appears to have been a noble-hearted woman, taking joy in helping others, entirely unselfish and, presumably, not without talent.

Chopin stayed at Calder House until he left for the Manchester concert on August 28. He told Grzymala that they received him 'very well; I had to sit down to the pianoforte 3 times. The hall is fine; 1,200 persons. I stayed in the country (there is too much smoke in the town).' He was the guest of a Mr. Salis Schwabe – 'he is one of the first manufacturers, owns the biggest chimney in Manchester, which cost £5,000.' There were three other artists at this concert: Mesdames Alboni and Corbari, and Signor Salvi – all singers. There was also an orchestra which performed three overtures: Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*, Beethoven's *Prometheus* and Weber's *Rübezahl*. Chopin's items were an *Andante* and *Scherzo*, some *Études*, a *Nocturne* and the *Berceuse*, besides an encore in the second part. G. A. Osborne was the accompanist, and he has recorded that Chopin begged him not to be present. 'You, my dear Osborne,' he said, 'who have heard me so often in Paris, remain with those impressions. My playing will be lost in such a large room, and my compositions will be ineffective. Your presence at the concert will be painful both to you and me.' 'Notwithstanding this

appeal,' continues Osborne, 'I was present, unknown to him, in a remote corner of the room, where I helped to cheer and applaud him. I heard him then for the last time, when his prediction was fulfilled in part, for his playing was too delicate to create enthusiasm, and I felt truly sorry for him.'

The *Manchester Guardian* reported the concert in the issue of Wednesday, August 30 as follows:

With the more instrumental portion of the audience, Mons. Chopin was perhaps an equal feature of interest with Alboni, as he was preceded by a high musical reputation. Chopin appears to be about thirty years of age. He is very spare in frame, and there is an almost painful air of feebleness in his appearance and gait. This vanishes when he seats himself at the instrument, in which he seems for the time perfectly absorbed. Chopin's music and his style of performance partake of the same leading characteristics – refinement rather than vigour – subtle elaboration rather than simple comprehensiveness in composition – an elegant, rapid touch, rather than a firm, nervous grasp of the instrument. Both his compositions and his playing appeared to be the perfection of chamber music – fit to be associated with the most refined instrumental quartets and quartet-playing – but wanting breadth and obviousness of design, and executive power, to be effective in a large concert hall. These are our impressions from hearing Mons. Chopin for the first time on Monday evening. He was warmly applauded by many of the most accomplished amateurs in the town, and he received an encore in his last piece, a compliment thus accorded to each of the four London artistes who appeared at this concert.

From Manchester Chopin journeyed back to Edinburgh, then on to Johnstone Castle, to relatives of Miss Stirling named Houston. He writes to Grzymala from there on September 4:

The castle is very fine and luxurious, kept up on a grand scale. I shall stay here for a week, and then go to Lady Murray, to a still more beautiful district, where I shall spend another week. Perhaps I may play in Edinburgh and therefore shall stay in Scotland until October. . . . This letter was begun yesterday, to be finished to-day; but the weather has changed:

it is bad outside, and I am cross and depressed, and people bore me with their excessive attentions, I can't breathe, I can't work. I feel alone, alone, alone. . . . Why should I bore you with my jeremiads! I ought to cheer you up with my letter. . . . Here it's nothing but cousins of great families and great names that no one on the Continent has ever heard of. Conversation is always entirely genealogical, like the Gospels; who begat whom, and he begat, and he begat, and he begat, and so on for two pages till you come to Jesus.

He finishes the letter four days later :

You know what an effort writing sometimes is for me; the pen burns under my fingers, my hair falls out and I can't write what I want to say, only a thousand futile things.

In a postscript he tells his friend of his lucky escape from death.

We were driving in the neighbourhood, above the sea. The carriage we were in was a coupé, with two very fine young thoroughbred English horses. One horse began to prance, caught its leg and started to kick; the other did the same; as they bolted on a slope in the park, the reins dragged, the coachman fell from his box. The carriage was smashed with banging from tree to tree; we were just tumbling over the precipice, when a tree stopped the carriage. One horse broke loose and bolted frantically, the other fell under the carriage. The windows were broken by branches. Luckily nothing happened to me, except a few bruises on my legs from the jolting. . . . I confess to you that I contemplated my last hour with composure; but the thought of broken arms and legs disconcerts me. To be crippled would be the last straw.

Before going to Johnstone Castle Chopin spent a few days with a Polish doctor, Lyszczyński, in Edinburgh. The house was small and the children were sent away, their nursery being temporarily turned into a bedroom for the illustrious guest. Chopin hated hotels and felt safer with a physician close at hand. Mrs. Lyszczyński afterwards referred to this short and unexpected visit. Chopin always rose late, and asked for soup in his

room; then his servant would curl his hair. When he appeared with his shirts, boots and clothes all beautifully clean and neat, he seemed more vain than any woman. The maid-servants were not allowed into his room under any pretext, and the doctor had to carry him upstairs. He was always shivering, even if sitting in front of a fire, and the only way he could keep warm was by playing the piano. He could not bear to be contradicted, particularly by a woman. Neither would he be told what to do. The doctor's wife thought him very gallant to ladies, but heartless.

Whilst at Johnstone Castle Chopin went over to Strachur on Loch Fyne to stay with Lord Murray, whose wife was an excellent pianist. The prospect of the tedious journey seemed to frighten him – 'one has to cross Loch Long and go round the east coast of Scotland'. He must have meant west. Nowadays it is nothing of a trip.

Before finally leaving Johnstone Castle, which was 11 miles from Glasgow, he paid a hurried visit to Edinburgh to see Prince and Princess Czartoryski. They had been worrying about his health, Princess Marcellina having heard from Grzymala how ill he was, and they could not be happy till they had seen him. 'I came to life a little under their Polish spirit; it gave me strength to play in Glasgow.' The Glasgow concert took place at 2.30 p.m. on September 27 in the Merchant Hall. Tickets were half a guinea. It was not a very great success and Chopin cleared about £60; he had hoped for £100, but the townspeople thought the price of tickets too high. His audience was almost entirely composed of outside families, and it was said that never before had so many carriages been seen in the city. The Prince and Princess were invited to dinner at Johnstone Castle. 'So we spent the whole day together. Lord and Lady Murray, old Torphichen (they had come 100 miles), – all of them could not say enough in praise of Princess Marcellina. . . . You can believe how that day revived me. But to-day I am depressed.' The reason of this was that a thick fog prevented him from seeing Stirling Castle from his window, for he was writing from Keir in Perthshire, quite near Bridge of Allan, where he says there was 'no post, no railway, no carriage (even for a drive); not a boat, not even a dog to whistle to.' – Hence

his depression. An uncle of Jane Stirling, William Stirling, afterwards Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, was his host. He was a rich bachelor and owned some fine Murillos :

He has just brought out an expensive work (you know, they know how to do that) on the Spanish school. He has travelled everywhere, and in the East; he has brains. . . . He keeps open house, usually 30 persons to dinner.

Sir William published several books, mostly on Spanish art and history.

In this letter Chopin relates that Queen Victoria had unexpectedly passed near-by in the train for London, as the fog was too thick for her to travel by sea, which was her usual method of journeying to Scotland. 'People say this must have greatly pleased Prince Albert, who gets seasick, whereas the Queen, like a real maritime sovereign, does not mind the sea at all.' Once more Grzymala is informed of his friend's sufferings and sorrows.

I am weaker, I can't compose anything, less from lack of desire than from physical hindrances. . . . The whole morning, till 2 o'clock, I am fit for nothing now; and then, when I dress, everything strains me, and I gasp that way till dinner-time. Afterwards one has to sit two hours at table with the men, look at them talking and *listen* to them drinking. I am bored to death (I am thinking of one thing and they of another, in spite of all their courtesy and French remarks at table). Then I go to the drawing-room, where it takes all my efforts to be a little animated – because then they usually want to hear me –; then my good Daniel [his valet] carries me up to my bedroom, undresses me, gets me to bed, leaves the light; and I am free to breathe and dream till it is time to begin all over again. And when I get a little bit used to it, then it is time to go somewhere else; for my Scottish ladies give me no peace. . . . They are stifling me out of *courtesy*, and out of the same *courtesy* I don't refuse them.

Chopin's Edinburgh recital took place on the evening of October 4 in the Hopetoun Rooms, Queen Street. Again the

tickets were 10/6, and so poor was the application for them that Miss Stirling bought up 100. The programme advertised was 1. *Andante et Impromptu*. (Probably the *Andante* of Op. 22.) 2. *Études* (the *F* minor, Op. 25, No. 1, and the *C* sharp minor, Op. 25, No. 7, were included). 3. *Nocturne et Berceuse*. 4. *Grande Valse Brillante*. 5. *Andante, précédé d'un Largo* (probably two of his slower pieces or movements). 6. *Préludes, Ballade, Mazurkas et Valses*. It is difficult to discover the identical pieces he played. As a rule he rarely played any of his larger works, mostly relying on the *Grande Polonaise*, Op. 22, and the *B* flat minor *Scherzo*, Op. 31, to show off his technique. The critic of the *Edinburgh Courier* on October 7 speaks of his compositions being 'among the best specimens of classical excellence'. His playing 'is the most finished we have ever heard. He has neither the ponderosity nor the digital power of a Mendelssohn, a Thalberg, or Liszt; consequently his execution would appear less effective in a large room; but as a chamber pianist he stands unrivalled'. Chopin's only recorded comment was made to Gutmann on October 16. 'I have played in Edinburgh; all the distinguished folk of the region assembled. They say it went off well. There was a little success, and a little money.'

After the concert Chopin went back to Calder House, and from there visited several of the Scottish nobility. He wrote to Mlle de Rozières on October 1 or 2 (Opienski wrongly gives the 20th) that he may stay with the Duchess of Argyll at Inverary, then with Lady Belhaven at Wishaw. He visited the Duke of Hamilton in Lanarkshire, and on the way back to Edinburgh caught a chill which kept him in bed for five days at the house of Dr. Lyszczyński, the only doctor he had any faith in. He then expressed a wish to go back to Hamilton Palace (Chopin appears to have been happier there) and then on to the Duke's place in the Isle of Arran. He did go to Hamilton Palace, but there is no confirmation of any visit to Arran. Grzymala received a letter from Hamilton Palace dated October 21. Chopin is bitter, sarcastic and amusing in turn.

Art, here, means painting, sculpture and architecture. Music is not art and is not called art; and if you say an artist, an Englishman understands that as meaning a painter, archi-

tect or sculptor. Music is a profession, not an art, and no one speaks or writes of any musician as an artist, for in their language and customs it is something else than art; it is a *profession*. No doubt it is the fault of the musicians; but try to correct such things! These queer folk play for the sake of beauty, but to teach them decent things is a joke. . . . One day, after my piano [playing], and after various songs by other Scottish ladies, they brought a kind of accordion, and she [his hostess, locally regarded as a great musician] began with the utmost gravity to play on it the most atrocious tunes. What would you have? Every creature here seems to me to have a screw loose.

He mentions another occasion when a lady whistled with guitar accompaniment. 'Those who know my compositions ask me: "*Jouez-moi votre second Soupir - j'aime beaucoup vos cloches*".' Chopin is exasperated with the same exclamation made after each piece he plays - ' "*leik [sic] water*". I have not yet played to any Englishwoman without her saying to me: - "*leik water!!!*" They all look at their hands, and play the wrong notes with much feeling. Eccentric folk, God help them.' Many readers will probably agree with Chopin's observations and think they could be applied to-day.

On the last day of October he undertook the wearisome journey back to London, tired, dejected, and resigned to his fate. He was almost too weak to care where he was, or whether the twelve weeks in Scotland had been any pleasure, or whether his concerts had given him any artistic satisfaction. He wrote to Dr. Lyszczyński on November 3, giving 4 St. James's Place as his address. To Grzymala on November 17-18 was sent another heartfelt letter:

I have been ill the last 18 days; ever since I reached London. I have not left the house at all, I have had such a cold and such headaches, short breath and all my bad symptoms. The doctor visits me every day. He stiffened me up so that I could play yesterday at that Polish concert and ball, which was very splendid; but though I left immediately after playing, I could not sleep all night. My head is very painful, apart from cough and suffocation. . . . Princess Marcellina also is so kind that she calls almost every day, as if at a hospital.

He asks his friend to look out an apartment in Paris for him, with a little room for the valet on the same floor.

I should not like to give up my present man. . . . Why, why am I bothering you with all this: I don't know, for I don't care about anything. But I suppose I have to think of my health, so help me out about it, and write me your view of the matter. I have never cursed anyone; but now my life is so unbearable that it seems to me it would give me relief if I could curse Lucrezia. — But no doubt she also suffers, — suffers all the more because she will doubtless grow old in anger. I am endlessly sorry for Sol. . . . If I could have a room somewhere upstairs for the valet, let me know, because it may be necessary to begin lighting fires at once. — But what am I going back for? Why should God kill me this way, not at once, but little by little and through the fever of indecision.

Was ever a more despairing letter written? George Sand meant more to Chopin than most biographers have made out. He cannot get her out of his mind, and his love is turning to hatred. It was consolation and tenderness that he longed for and so bitterly missed. The tragedy is heartbreaking.

On November 16 Chopin was foolishly advised to play at a 'Grand Polish Ball and Concert at the Guildhall under Royal and distinguished patronage'. His presence was of so little moment as to be passed unnoticed by the press in their account of the event. The concert was considered the least important part of the entertainment and few of the ticket-holders paid any attention to it. Where were his wonderful compatriots for whom he dragged himself out of bed? The pianist only played a few pieces which included the first two of the *Études* of Op. 25. That is all that is known of the unfortunate affair, except for a few sentences of Dr. Francis Hueffer in an essay on Chopin, one of which says: 'His playing at such a place was a well-intentioned mistake.' This was the last public appearance of the great artist. It was as tragic as his life — a disastrous good-bye.

Chopin intended leaving for Paris at once and told Mlle de Rozières on Sunday, November 19, that he might arrive there on the following Thursday, Friday or Saturday. 'The English

climate at this time of year is quite impossible for me, even according to the doctor. Since November 1st I have been in my room, in my dressing-gown, and have been out only on the 16th, to play for my compatriots.' He pathetically asks her to buy a *cord* of wood and have hot fires in his rooms: to have the furniture and curtains well dusted,

especially the bed curtains, for I think I shall have to handle them often. Also have the little alcoves of the bedroom well swept out at the corners. I am in rather a hurry to breathe better, to be able to understand people, and to see the faces of a few friends again.

Grzymala received a similar letter written on Tuesday, November 21. Chopin asks for a bunch of violets, 'so that the sitting-room may smell sweet. I want to meet with a little poetry on my return, – passing through the sitting-room to the bedroom, where I shall doubtless be laid up for long.' He even asked Pleyel to send 'some kind of piano by Thursday evening. . . . One more day here, and I should, not die, but *go mad*.' Niecks gives January as the date of this letter, but that is out of the question, if one re-examines the letter to Mlle de Rozières.

The following day a letter is written to Solange:

To-morrow I go to Paris, scarcely dragging myself, and weaker than you have ever seen me. The doctors are driving me away from here. I am swollen up with neuralgia, can neither breathe nor sleep. . . . Sir J. Clark, the Queen's doctor, came once to see me and to give me his *benediction*. So I shall groan in the Place d'Orléans till things get better.

There is no evidence to prove whether Chopin travelled the next day, but we can assume that he did. The next recorded letter is again to Solange and is dated Paris, December 14.

There is a fragmentary letter written to Grzymala from London, headed November, which shows his appalling condition. It is a collection of broken-up sentences and crossed-out lines and absolutely broken-hearted and undecipherable utterances. Part of this letter has already been quoted earlier in the

chapter – that which refers to the rumours of marriage with Miss Stirling.

. . . the London *fogs* are driving me out, so I am returning to Paris, if it is not too late for the journey. . . . Anyhow, I don't need to write you all this, for you know how I think. . . . [Crossed out.] So I don't think at all of a wife, but of home, of my Mother, my sisters. May God keep them in His good thoughts. Meanwhile, what has become of my art? And my heart, where have I wasted it? [Crossed out.] I scarcely remember any more, how they sing at home. That world slips away from me somehow; I forget, I have no more strength. [Crossed out.] If I rise a little, I fall again lower than ever. I am not complaining to you, but since you have asked, I explain to you that I am nearer to a coffin than to a marriage bed. My mind is fairly calm. [Crossed out.]

Chopin was accompanied to France by his valet and a Polish refugee named Leonard Niedzwiecki, who had been gaining a livelihood in England as a writer on Polish history, and had been the honorary librarian to the Polish colony in London. This companion told Niecks that Chopin suffered terribly from breathlessness during the journey. The first sight of Boulogne was a moment of ecstasy, and the predominating thought was wonder as to why he had ever left France. During the train journey to Paris he remarked to Niedzwiecki: 'Do you see the cattle in this meadow? They have more intelligence than the English.' His lifelong aversion for Englishmen had not diminished. But had he tried to understand them? Had they, in turn, given him any encouragement? By the kindness and warmth of their hospitality, particularly in Scotland, one must answer 'yes'. But that distrustful nature of his would not allow friendship. Throughout his life he was sceptical, and created round himself an almost impenetrable barrier. Apart from his family, there were never more than half a dozen people that he cared for profoundly. With the exception of Gutmann, and perhaps Delacroix and later, Franchomme, his only intimates were his compatriots, Wojciechowski, Matuszynski, Grzymala and Fontana. The French never entirely won his heart.

George Sand and Chopin, despite their relationship, never

completely understood each other. She was flattered at first, then proud of her victory, afterwards grew tired – she claimed this as a literary privilege – then became bored by her patient. Chopin was repelled by her, then enveloped, then subjugated and finally cast aside. His cursing of Lucrezia was not so much a heart-break as a shattering of pride – often a feminine characteristic – for it was not in him to love anyone passionately. In some respects one cannot think of him as a man. Jane Stirling undoubtedly wearied him, but her magnanimity was admirable. Most women were attracted to him because of his helplessness, but her actions showed that she had deeper feelings. She loved Chopin and was probably prepared to marry him at any moment. We already know what he thought about such an alliance. In all truth, his was not a lovable character – he was too self-centred, too petty; but perhaps he was after all only too aware of his disabilities; and his sufferings were great.

He left for Paris a man completely broken in spirit and in health. His mind was normal to the end – but hardly a flicker of life remained.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### LAST DAYS

1849

CHOPIN must have been overjoyed at seeing his beloved Paris once again, and momentarily happy to be surrounded by his personal belongings. Perhaps he had visions of an improvement in his health and had resolved to take greater care. But any hopes were to be shattered. He heard of the death of his physician, Dr. Molin, to whom he attributed the saving of his life during the winter of 1847, and who was the only person whose advice he sought and acted upon. To Chopin this appeared the hand of Fate, and the calamity destroyed for him every prospect of recovery. He submitted to his friends' wishes and saw other doctors, but he had no faith in them. In a letter to Solange of January 30 he tells her —

Molin knew the secret of how to liven me up. Since then I have seen M. Louis, Dr. Roth, during two months; and now M. Simon, a great reputation among the homeopaths; but they just sound me and give no relief. They all agree about climate, peaceful life, rest. Rest, — I shall get it one day without them.

The only other source of information one can find is the *Journal* of Delacroix. On January 29 the painter went to see Chopin and they spoke of George Sand. Delacroix said that he foresaw for her an unhappy old age — Chopin did not agree, saying 'Her own conscience does not reproach her with any of the things that her friends reproach her with. She has good health to sustain her: only one thing would affect her profoundly — the loss of Maurice, or that he should turn out badly.' On March 30 and again on April 11 Delacroix when he went to see Chopin in the evening met 'the enchantress, Madame Potocka', who sang on both occasions and greatly impressed him with the beauty of her voice. On April 7, he found Alkan with Chopin, and in the afternoon took the invalid for a drive.

'Although I was tired, I was glad to be of some use to him.' On April 14 he again spent the evening with Chopin and found him very weak and hardly breathing. 'After a time my presence revived him. He told me that his most cruel torment was *ennui*. I asked him if he had not often known the insupportable emptiness that I sometimes feel myself. He told me that he had always known how to occupy himself; any occupation, however unimportant, passes the time, and dispels *ces vapeurs*. Sorrows are another matter.' On April 22 Chopin 'dragged himself to the first performance of *Le Prophète* [Meyerbeer]; his horror for this Rhapsody'. By May 17, Chopin appeared to Delacroix to be a little better.

In a note to Solange on April 5 Chopin says he is at the end of his resources. 'I have got to my 4th doctor. They charge me 10 francs a visit, come sometimes twice a day. . . . Be content with the greatest of joys: health.' In May, Solange gave birth to another daughter, an event which did not pass unnoticed by Chopin. 'An unhappy friend blesses you and blesses your child.' It is extraordinary to find how Chopin yearned for the friendship of Solange, almost as if his love for the mother had been transferred to the daughter. He wrote to her frequently, and always most affectionately. The once wild girl had become tamer; life was not as easy as she had anticipated, and she seems to have become more considerate and sympathetic. Out of the wreck of the Sand household she and Frédéric clung together. In the last weeks at the Place Vendôme she proved her affection.

About this period he was disturbed by the death of many of his friends: Kalkbrenner on June 10; Madame Catalani (the singer who gave him a watch when he was ten years old) on June 12; the eldest son of Delaroche, the painter; Franchomme's good maid-servant; and 'no end of deaths in the Cour d'Orléans'. Cholera was rampant in Europe and he dreaded the scourge, but was glad to tell Louise on June 25 that it was abating. He wrote to Grzymala on June 18 that he was stronger, that he was eating better and had 'dropped the medicaments; but I gasp and cough just the same, only I bear it better. I have not yet begun to play, I can't compose - '

## According to Liszt, Chopin

from time to time added a few touches to some scattered leaves, but without succeeding in ordering his thoughts in accordance with his designs. A respectful regard for his fame led him to wish that these desultory sketches should be destroyed so that they could not possibly be mutilated, disfigured and transformed into posthumous works which might be unworthy of him. With the exception of a short waltz and a last nocturne, written as parting memories, he left behind him no finished manuscripts.

He also busied himself with attempting a *Method for the Piano-forte*, but his strength was not equal to the strain, and only a few pages were written, which were destroyed with the other unfinished works.

Chopin's women friends did not desert him. He continually refers to the Princess Beauveau, Princess Sapieha, Princess Czartoryska, Countess Potocka, Baroness de Rothschild and Madame Obreskoff (a Russian whom he met at Moscheles' house in 1839) as being regular visitors. They all tended to his wants until the end with true devotion.

About June 20 Chopin moved to another apartment, for he writes to Grzymala from 74 Rue Chaillot on June 22. His doctors recommended a change to a quieter and higher neighbourhood and less congested quarter where the air would be purer. From this new abode he could see over Paris, which gave him infinite joy. The invalid was by now as poor in pocket as in health, and wondered how he could afford such a lodging. His friends falsely told him that the rent was much cheaper in the summer and was only 200 francs a month. In reality, it was 400, Madame Obreskoff having offered to make up the balance.

Three days later he wrote an S.O.S. letter to Louise. He could bear the struggle no longer.

If you can, do come. I am ill, and no doctor will help me as much as some of you. If you are short of money, borrow some; if I get better, I can easily earn and repay the lender; but just now I am stripped too bare to send you any. . . . My friends and well-wishers think the best medicine for me will be Ludwika's [Louise's] presence here, as Ludwika will doubtless

see from Madame Obreskoff's letter. So try for a passport, . . . So mother Ludwika and daughter Ludwika, bring your thimbles and knitting-needles, and I will give you handkerchiefs to mark and stockings to knit, and you can spend two or three months in the fresh air with your old brother and uncle. The journey is easier now. You don't need much luggage. Here we will manage as cheaply as we can. Even if it is sometimes far for Kalasanty [the husband] from the Champs d'Elysées to the city, he can stay in my lodging in the Square d'Orléans. The omnibuses go from the square, right to this very door. I don't myself know why I want Ludwika so much, but it's as if it would give me hope. I guarantee that it will be good for her too. I hope the family council will send her to me; who knows whether I won't return with her, if I recover. We should then all embrace each other, as I wrote to you, only still with teeth in our heads and no wigs. Wives ought always to obey their husbands, so the husband must be asked to bring his wife. So I beg him to do it; and if he considers, he can give no greater pleasure and benefit to her, or to me, or even to the children, if he brings any of them (I have no doubt about the daughter-kin). It will cost money, that is true, but that could not be better spent, nor could one travel more cheaply. Once here, we can find a shelter. . . . To-day the weather is fine, so I sit in the sitting-room and admire my view over all Paris: the towers, the Tuileries, the Chamber of Deputies, St. Germain l'Auxerrois, St. Etienne du Mont, Notre Dame, the Panthéon, St. Sulpice, Val de Grace, the Invalides, from 5 windows, and nothing but gardens between. You will see when you come. Now about passport and money; begin soon as it takes time. Write me a line at once. You know, 'even cypresses have their caprices'; my caprice now is to see you. Perhaps God will allow things to come right; and if God doesn't, then at least act as if He would allow it. I have good hope of it, for I seldom demand much, and would refrain from asking this if I were not pressed by everyone who wishes me well. Hurry, Mr. Kalasanty, and I will give you a large and excellent cigar for it; I know a person who loves to smoke; but in the garden. I hope my letter for Mamma's name-day came in time, so that she did not miss me. I don't want to think about all this or I shall have fever; I am not feverish, thank the Lord; which confuses and annoys all ordinary doctors.

Your affectionate, but sick brother, CH.

Frédéric could not disguise the seriousness of his illness. The letter took him two days to write, and the effort weakened him considerably.

Grzymala was told on July 2 'I have not spat blood since the day before yesterday, – my legs are swollen, – but I'm still weak and lazy, I can't go upstairs, I suffocate'. Solange is the recipient of a more cheerful letter written on July 4:

It is possible that the Emperor, who is at Warsaw now, may give my sister permission to come to see me; only then, after a thorough examination, shall I know whether I must leave Paris, or whether I can no longer endure long journeys and must stay here. . . . I imagine your little girl with a big head, laughing, crying, noisy, slobbering, biting, and all the rest. You two must be very amusing together. When shall you make her begin to ride on horseback? . . . Paris is becoming more and more deserted. It is hot here and dusty. There is *poverty*, and *dirt*, and one sees faces that belong to the other world.

Chopin was aching to leave Paris. On July 10 Grzymala is told that another doctor, Cruveillé, has been consulted.

I have some sort of diarrhoea, and he advises me to take almost nothing and just keep still. But I see that he also regards me as consumptive, for he ordered a teaspoonful of something with *lichen* in it. So, I can't travel. . . . I have no news yet from my sister. I shall stay here this month, but if my sister does not come, I shall go, for everything is too dear here. I play less and less; I can't write anything.

Berlioz, in an article on Chopin in the *Journal des Débats*, October 27, 1849, relating to the lingering last months, wrote:

His feebleness and suffering had become so great that he could no longer play the piano or compose; even the least conversation fatigued him to an alarming degree. He tried, as a rule, to make himself understood as much as possible by signs. This was the isolation in which, at his own wish, he passed the last months of his life – an isolation misunderstood by many people, and attributed by some to a disdainful pride, by others

to black moods – both equally foreign to the nature of this charming and excellent artist.

Shortly after this Chopin heard of Miss Stirling's bountiful gift. The story has had various wrappings, all more or less similar in effect but differing in detail. Chopin's letter to Grzymala on July 28 happily clears up the mystery. It appears that Chopin's friends, particularly Franchomme, who at this time looked after his affairs in general, were concerned at the impoverished state of the sick man's finances. Miss Stirling heard, or was told, of his plight, and secretly sent 25,000 francs to Chopin. She did not wish the patient to know who was his benefactor, so enclosed the money in a sealed packet which she gave to a messenger to take to Mme Etienne, the *concièrge* at the Square d'Orléans, saying that it was very important and that she was to give it herself to M. Chopin. Unfortunately, whether through cleverness or forgetfulness, the *concièrge* omitted to deliver the packet, and by mid-July Chopin's poverty was extreme. By then, the friends interested themselves to find out the cause of the disappearance of such a large sum, and evidently Miss Stirling confessed to Chopin. Here are parts of his letter to Grzymala, who had been for some time in Poland recuperating from an illness, and to whom he had applied for help.

After your answer and her [Jane Stirling's] letter I just gave up. I didn't know whether to suspect her of hallucinations, or her messenger of theft, or whether to condemn Mme Etienne, or to regard myself as forgetful or crazy; in short, my head went round. She came to me with a confession and told everything so stupidly, and her sister apparently knew nothing about it. I was finally obliged to tell her the truth, that I could not understand such munificent gifts from anyone, unless perhaps the Queen of England or Miss Coutts.

The personage to whom such a sum was entrusted without his knowledge, and who took no receipt from Mme Etienne for the letter (or parcel), went to Alexis Somnambul [a well-known Parisian clairvoyant]. Alexis tells him that on a Thursday in March (the 8th) he [the messenger] took some very important papers, addressed – (he wrote down my address); that the

packet never arrived at its destination; that he has not got it, that he gave it up, in some kind of small dark room, to which one goes down 2 steps, to some woman; that she had in her hand a letter, which the postman had given to her; that, taking the letter in question from this person, she told him that she would at once deliver it; but, Alexis added, she carried it downstairs, without even showing it to me, and I never saw the letter.

On being asked what had happened to the letter, the clairvoyant said that 'if anyone would bring him some hair, or a handkerchief, or gloves, belonging to the person who received the letter, he could tell'.

Chopin devised a way of procuring a lock of Mme Etienne's hair. On the pretence of sending some of her hair instead of his own to a clairvoyant who was supposed to cure sick people by examining the condition of the hair, he persuaded her to cut off a lock, which was forwarded to Alexis. Alexis recognized the hair.

He said that she had put the sealed packet into a small piece of furniture beside her bed, that the packet was still there and not lost, or delivered, or opened. That if the man goes about it tactfully, she will give it up to him, but that care is necessary. So then this man went straight from me, at noon, to the *Square d'Orléans*, found Mme Etienne alone, reminded her that in March he had called and given her a packet for me, which he had told her was very important. She recognized him, and gave him back the packet, which he had given to her all those months back. It had not been *unsealed*, and inside were 25 thousands, *untouched*.

Chopin was flabbergasted at this magic, and orders Grzymala to believe henceforth in 'magnetism'.

It is difficult to say definitely how much Chopin retained of this large sum. Madame Rubio, for many years one of the master's favourite pupils, maintained that only 1,000 francs was accepted; Franchomme insisted that Chopin kept 12,000. Chopin himself told Grzymala in his letter of July 28: 'You may take notice that I did not accept the *donation*'; but, according to M. Binental, a note in his pocket diary on the same day clearly

shows that he retained 15,000. Whatever the sum, it was sufficient to prevent monetary anxiety, and facilitated the carrying out of the doctors' wishes later on to remove the invalid once more to quarters which were mechanically heated. In his letter to the same friend six days later Chopin is still unconvinced: 'That Alexis sticks in my head.' He even hints that the whole affair may have been an elaborate concoction on the part of Miss Stirling:

There is kindheartedness there, – but what showing off! I wish I could see you. . . . My sister still has no permit. Later it will be useless, for his [her husband's] vacation will be over. I gasp, cough and am drowsy: I do nothing, I want nothing.

Louise with her husband and daughter arrived on the 9th of August. Chopin was by now almost too feeble to speak, and made use of signs to interpret his wishes. His family knew from his despairing letter of June 25 that their beloved son and brother had lost hope, that he foreshadowed his death; but his ghastly appearance was an even more terrible shock than Louise was prepared for. He had shrivelled away to nothing. Always extremely thin and small-boned (for in 1840 he only weighed 97 lb.), after years of drooping and months of absolute wasting he must have been no heavier than the average boy of twelve. His pallor was like yellow parchment, and his large eyes, still luminous, had sunk into his head. He could no longer walk unassisted; he even could not hold up a book to read. The sight of his sister re-animated him a little – he wished Mlle de Rozières in a letter on August 14 'as much happiness as I have at this moment, with a little more health, for I am weaker than ever'. In the same month he asked Franchomme to send him some Bordeaux. 'I have to drink a little wine nowadays, and I have none. But wrap up the bottle, and put your own seal on it, for these messengers!! And I don't know to whom to entrust this message. How suspicious I have grown!'

Then came the news that Titus was coming to Ostend for a holiday. If only they could see each other once more! But the French were not friendly with the Russians, and Titus, now a Russian subject, could not obtain a visa. This was a cruel dis-

appointment to both of them. Chopin wrote to Titus, who was then in Carlsbad:

MY DEAREST ONE! —

It just needs for me to be as weak as this, and not able to move from Paris, when you are coming to Ostend. But I hope the Lord will allow you to come nearer to me. The doctors do not allow me to travel at all. I drink Pyrenean waters in my room, and your presence would do more for me than all physic. Yours till death,

FRYDERYK.

When Frédéric discovered that Titus could not gain the necessary permit he wished to go himself to Belgium.

I wanted to go abroad, to Valenciennes, by train, to embrace you; but a few days ago I was not able to get as far as Ville d'Avray, near Versailles, to my god-daughter, and the doctors will not let me leave Paris. . . . Perhaps you will manage to get here. I am not selfish enough to demand that you should come here for me; I am so weak that you would have only a few hours of boredom and disappointment, alternating with a few hours of pleasure and good memories; and I should like the time that we spend together to be only a time of complete happiness.

Titus could not come: and these two friends who had cherished each other so much in their youth, and who had not met since they were in Vienna in 1830, never saw each other again.

During this period of helplessness Chopin, who had never been a great reader, expressed a desire to be read aloud to. A young brother of one of his favourite pupils, Elise Gavard, to whom was dedicated the *Berceuse*, volunteered to satisfy his wish. Charles Gavard has left a few reminiscences of the hours he spent with the dying man. According to these writings, Chopin preferred, above all, Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique*: its clear and concise language and the author's sane judgement especially appealed to him, and the chapter on Taste was the last ever read to him.

Franchomme had gone to Touraine in search of sunshine after an illness, and to him, on September 17, Chopin's last

letter was written, one month to the day before he died. The handwriting, though still elegant and fine, shows a great change, and is very feeble.

DEAR FRIEND, —

I am very sorry that you were not well at Le Mans.

But now you are in Touraine, where the sunshine will doubtless improve your health.

As for me, I am rather worse than better. MM. Cruveillé, Louis and Blache, have had a consultation, and have pronounced that I am not to travel, but to take a lodging with south windows and stay in Paris.

After much searching, one has been found for me at last, very expensive, it is true, but satisfactory in every respect — place Vendôme no. 12 — Albrecht has his office there at this moment. . . . Meara has been very helpful about finding the place.

. . . In short, during the coming winter I shall see you all . . . from under excellent conditions.

My sister will remain with me, unless she should be urgently sent for to go home.

I love you, and for this time that is all I can tell you, for I am ready to faint from fatigue and weakness.

My sister is glad that she will see Madame Franchomme again — and I too am equally glad.

— May the will of Heaven be done.

— My best greetings to Monsieur and Madame Forest. — How I should like to spend a few days with you all.

— Is Madame de Lauvergeat also staying by the sea. — Don't forget to greet her from me when you see her, and her husband too.

Embrace your babes.

Write me a line.

Always yours

CH.

My sister sends a kiss to Madame Franchomme.

The following week Chopin was carried to his new and last home. The dying man took great interest in the arrangement of the apartments, and himself ordered new and quite expensive furnishings. He wanted everything to look charming and his friends to be comfortable, as if he expected to live for a long

time. Alas! he was to be there barely three weeks. Liszt even says that some new furniture actually arrived on the day he died.

By now he was too ill to sit up in bed except in someone's arms. His choking fits became more frequent and of longer duration. Princess Marcelline Czartoryska took turns with Louise as chief nurse, and his most intimate friends forgathered in the sitting-room, thinking each day would be the last. Moscheles had just arrived in Paris and sent to enquire after his dying colleague. 'We found our worst fears confirmed,' he wrote. 'His sister is nursing him; the poor fellow's days are now numbered; he suffers greatly.'

When all hope was abandoned, a priest was sent for. The Abbé Alexandre Jelowicki, a friend of his youth, had begged to see the sufferer, but on three occasions had been turned away by the grief-stricken friends. By a ruse the Abbé was able to inform Chopin of his wish to see him, and was at once admitted. Thereafter he came every day until the end. On one of these last days Chopin told the Abbé that he had not been to confession for years. He added: 'In order not to offend my mother I would not die without receiving the sacraments, but I do not understand them in the way that you desire. I understand the blessing in so far as it is an unburdening of an over-weighted heart into the hand of a friend, but not as a sacrament. I am willing to confess to you if you wish, because I love you, not because I deem it necessary.' As each day wore on, the Abbé grew more distressed at Chopin's unwillingness. On the morning of October 13, whilst Chopin was having breakfast, the Abbé reminded him that it was his [the Abbé's] brother's name-day. 'Dearest friend, you must give me something for to-day.' 'What shall I give you?' 'Your soul,' demanded the Abbé. 'Ah, I understand! Here it is, take it!' The priest dropped to his knees and held out the crucifix; and the invalid, with tears streaming down his cheeks, made his confession. Then the absolved man put both his arms on the priest's shoulders in the true Polish fashion, and murmured: 'Thank you! Thank you! Thanks to you I shall not die like a pig.'

After one of his violent convulsions Chopin cried to the doctors to let him die. 'Why do you prolong my life when I have renounced my life to God, who has enlightened my soul? God

calls me; why keep me back?' His soul was at peace: all earthly cares were at an end.

One ray of sunshine brightened his last days. Countess Delphine Potocka had been sent for and arrived in Paris from Nice on Sunday, October 15. Chopin heard her voice in the sitting-room the moment she came. He begged her to sing. A piano was pushed into the doorway of the bedroom and this beautiful friend, whose voice had given Chopin so much delight in his early Paris days, mastering the tears that almost choked her, fulfilled the dying man's last wish. He loved her voice; it was fitting that it should be the last music he heard.

Accounts differ as to the song or songs which the Countess sang. Liszt and Karasowski, neither of whom was present, say the *Hymn to the Virgin* by Stradella and a *Psalm* by Marcello. Gutmann, who maintained he was there, emphatically declares that she sang the Marcello *Psalm* and an *Aria* by Pergolesi; Franchomme is just as certain that she only sang once and that it was an *Aria* from Bellini's opera *Beatrice di Tenda*. Tarnowski agrees with Franchomme, but Grzymala wrote that she sang melodies of Bellini and Rossini.

According to Charles Gavard, Chopin, on hearing Countess Potocka's name announced, exclaimed: 'I understand why God has delayed calling me back to Him; He wished to grant me once more the joy of seeing you.' Chopin appeared to be in a dream, and oblivious of his surroundings. Gavard was too overcome with emotion and grief to remember the songs; he only remembered that the last song was suddenly interrupted by the death-rattle, that the piano was speedily removed, that the friends all fell on their knees with the priest praying at the bedside.

The night was a desperate struggle, but in the morning the patient surprised everyone by asking them to gather round him. He asked them in turn to say good-bye, and had a message for each. To the Princess Czartoryska and Mlle Gavard he said: 'When you play together, think of me and I will hear you.' When Franchomme came, he said to the Princess: 'I recommend Franchomme to you, you will play Mozart in memory of me.'

Franchomme is credited with the story that Chopin had said to him on the Sunday (15th), 'She had said to me that I would

only die in her arms', meaning George Sand. This claim is made in his *Souvenirs*, but no other verification can be found. Even Karénine is sceptical. She quotes a letter of Pierre Leroux to George Sand (undated) which she thinks was written in 1850: 'I think of those words spoken by a dying man: "*If I had not become estranged from her (that is, from you) I should not be beginning my agony*".' Gavard makes out that a certain Madame M. came in the name of George Sand to enquire after the patient's condition, but that the friends present did not think the moment opportune for disturbing the peaceful thoughts of the sufferer. Gutmann maintained that George Sand herself came up the staircase and that he himself turned her away, fearing the terrible effect of their meeting on his master. He also told Niecks that Solange Clésinger came to ask him if her mother should see Chopin, and that she became a regular attendant herself and was with Gutmann at the final scene. Karénine is positive that George Sand was at Nohant when Chopin was so desperately ill and did not come to Paris until December. The mass of contradictions is impossible to unravel, but the fact that George Sand was never forgotten is proved by the finding in the pocket of Chopin's memorandum-book for the last year of a small silken envelope embroidered with the initials G. F. (George - Frédéric) containing a lock of George Sand's hair.

Much more enlightening is the account written by Chopin's niece, Madame Ciechomska, the daughter of Louise, who went to Paris with her father and mother. At the time she was 15 years old. Her article, which appeared in the *Kurier Warszawski* of August 9, 1882, included the following paragraph:

'My uncle did not die in the arms of M. Gutmann, for he was absent from Paris, and could not have watched beside him, as has been told. I would even add, the better to prove this absence of M. Gutmann during Chopin's last moments, that my mother and I only made his acquaintance later, when, immediately he returned to Paris, he hastened to visit us. And no one sang at Chopin's death-bed. It is only true that a short time before the death of my uncle, Madame Delphine Potocka, who had come to see him, sang to him an aria of Bellini; this may have given rise to the legend.'

After Chopin had said farewell to his friends he petitioned his sister to burn all his unpublished compositions. 'I owe it to the public and to myself to publish only the best works. I have kept to this resolution throughout my life and I wish to keep to it now.'

All through the evening of October 16 the Abbé was praying, but Chopin was too weak to make the responses. While being examined by his two doctors, the apparently lifeless patient was asked by Dr. Cruveillé if he suffered, and in a faint though quite distinct whisper Chopin answered 'Plus' (no longer). That was the last word he uttered. A few moments later, in the early hours of the morning of October 17, 1849, those watchful and loving friends saw that the life of the genius had ceased.

Later in the morning Clésinger came and took casts of the dead man's face and hands, and Kwiatkowski made several pencil drawings of his head and neck. Some days before he died Chopin wrote these last words in pencil: 'As this earth will suffocate me, I implore you to have my body opened, so that I may not be buried alive.' His wish was respected. His heart was sent to Poland and placed in the church of Sainte Croix at Warsaw.

*Comme c'est peu m'importe  
je vous conjure de faire  
ouvrir mon corps pour le  
suyver en terre etc*

All that day and the day following his friends and admirers paid their last respects. They all knew of his love for flowers, and Liszt says:

The next day they were brought in such large quantities that the bed on which they had laid him, and indeed, the



DEATH MASK OF CHOPIN

[F. W. Schmidt, Manchester



entire room almost disappeared from sight, hidden by the varied and beautiful hues of these floral offerings. He seemed to sleep in a garden of roses. After death his face regained its youthful beauty, its pure expression, and that serenity to which it had now long been unaccustomed. His youthful loveliness, so long dimmed by bitter sufferings, was restored by death, and, among the flowers he loved, he slept his long, last, dreamless sleep.

Not until October 30, thirteen days later, did the funeral in the Madeleine take place. Chopin had asked for his beloved *Requiem* of Mozart to be performed at the service, and it was the procuring of permission for female singers to carry out this wish that delayed the burial. The *Conservatoire* granted its orchestra, and the four singers were Jeanne Castellan, Pauline Viardot-Garcia, Alexis Dupont and Lablache, who had been the bass in the same work at Beethoven's funeral twenty-two years before. In the words of J. W. Davison, who was present at the ceremony:

The great door of the church was hung with black, the initials of the deceased being emblazoned in silver. The vast area of the modern Parthenon was crowded. The nave and aisles, the choir, the galleries above the magnificent porticos that adorn the walls, the interstices behind and between the columns of the porticos, the organ gallery, and the gallery that runs round the choir, immediately under the windows, were alive with strangers, who had come to see the last of Frédéric Chopin. . . . There could not have been less than 4,000 present. In the space that separates the nave from the choir, a lofty mausoleum had been erected, hung with black and silver drapery, with the initials 'F. C.' conspicuous on the pall.

The funeral march from the dead composer's *Sonata in B flat minor* was played, arranged for orchestra by Reber, and Lefébure-Wély played the *E minor* and *B minor* Preludes on the organ. The leading *littérateurs* and musicians of Paris were present and Meyerbeer and Prince Adam Czartoryski walked behind the hearse; the pall-bearers were Prince Alexander Czartoryski, Delacroix, Franchomme and Gutmann.

In accordance with Chopin's wishes there was no ceremony

at the graveside when his body was laid to its eternal rest. The soil which he brought with him from Poland nineteen years before, and which had been preserved in its silver cup, was now to be with him in his last earthly contact in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise. His body has remained there; but his heart is where it always was, in his adored Poland. His dream has been realised – for Poland is once more a nation. Chopin loved his country, and because of that love he was able to give it a national heritage. His poetry did not belong to one man; it belonged to a nation bereft of its freedom. He was endowed by his genius to express the soul of his people; and by his music he has helped more than any of his compatriots to preserve the ideal of his country. He lived and died a patriot.

# CHOPIN'S PUBLISHED WORKS

OPUS	TITLE OF WORK AND PAGE REFERENCES	DATE OF PUBLICATION
1.	Rondo in C minor, 38, 152, 297 . . . . .	1825
2.	Variations on <i>La ci darem la mano</i> , with orch. accomp., 39, 43, 44, 53, 54, 55, 69, 101, 131, 133, 134, 152-154, 293, 297 . . . . .	1830
3.	Introduction and Polonaise, pf. and violoncello, 68, 82, 154, 297 . . . . .	1833
4.	Sonata in C minor, 43, 44, 50, 88, 268, 293 . . . . .	1851
5.	Rondo alla Mazurka, 19, 42, 152, 297 . . . . .	1827
6.	Four Mazurkas . . . . . (F sharp minor, C sharp minor, E major, E flat minor), 154	1832
7.	Five Mazurkas . . . . . (B flat major, A minor, F minor, A flat major, C major), 117, 142, 145, 154, 155	1832
8.	Trio for pf., violin and violoncello, 31, 44, 50, 75, 82, 153, 154 . . . . .	1833
9.	Three Nocturnes . . . . . (B flat minor, E flat major, B major), 153, 154-156, 180, 297	1833
10.	Twelve Studies, 68, 82, 107, 150, 153, 154, 156, 180, 181, 264 . . . . .	1833
11.	Concerto in E minor, pf. and orch., 68, 72, 74-76, 78-80, 82, 85, 87, 92, 99, 105, 111, 112, 117, 143, 153, 154, 161, 181, 233, 355 . . . . .	1833
12.	Variations on <i>Je vends des scapulaires</i> of Hérold, 154 . . . . .	1833
13.	Grande Fantaisie on Polish Airs, with orch. accomp., 47, 50, 70, 71, 79, 105, 153, 154, 277 . . . . .	1834
14.	Krakowiak, Rondo with orch. accomp., 50, 54, 55, 56, 58, 71, 82, 153, 154, 277 . . . . .	1834
15.	Three Nocturnes . . . . . (F major, F sharp major, G minor), 154, 297	1834
16.	Rondo in E flat major, 154 . . . . .	1834
17.	Four Mazurkas . . . . . (B flat major, E minor, A flat major, A minor), 154	1834
18.	Waltz in E flat major, 154, 158, 169, 297, 369 . . . . .	1834
19.	Boléro, 154, 232, 277, 295, 297 . . . . .	1834
20.	Scherzo in B minor, 232, 242, 297 . . . . .	1835
21.	Concerto in F minor, pf. and orch., 66, 69, 70, 71, 72, 82, 131, 133-136, 143, 153, 160, 355 . . . . .	1836
22.	Andante spianato and Grande Polonaise brillante, pf. and orch., 82, 83, 103, 166, 369 . . . . .	1836
23.	Ballade in G minor, 189, 221, 297 . . . . .	1836
24.	Four Mazurkas . . . . . (G minor, C major, A flat major, B minor)	1835
25.	Twelve Studies, 153, 232, 288, 290, 294, 298, 369, 371 . . . . .	1837
26.	Two Polonaises . . . . . (C sharp minor, E flat minor), 232	1836

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27.	Two Nocturnes (C sharp minor, D flat major) 232, 297	1836
28.	Twenty-four Preludes, 68, 236, 237, 239, 242, 245, 248-252, 257-259, 261, 264, 275, 290, 298, 389	1839
29.	Impromptu in A flat major, 232	1837
30.	Four Mazurkas (C minor, B minor, D flat major, C sharp minor), 232	1837
31.	Scherzo in B flat minor, 232, 297, 369	1837
32.	Two Nocturnes (B major, A flat major), 232, 277, 297	1837
33.	Four Mazurkas (G sharp minor, D major, C major, B minor), 261	1838
34.	Three Waltzes (A flat major, A minor, F major)	1838
35.	Sonata in B flat minor, 248, 267, 268, 275, 277, 279, 289, 389	1840
36.	Impromptu in F sharp major, 248, 273, 277, 279, 289, 294	1840
37.	Two Nocturnes (G minor, G major), 248, 268, 277, 279, 289, 297	1840
38.	Ballade in F major, 243, 248, 252, 258, 259, 261, 277, 279, 284, 289	1840
39.	Scherzo in C sharp minor, 248, 252, 275, 277, 279, 284, 289	1840
40.	Two Polonaises (A major, C minor), 248, 252, 257-261, 273, 277, 279, 284, 289, 297	1840
41.	Four Mazurkas (C sharp minor, E minor, B major, A flat major), 248, 261, 268, 277, 279, 284, 289, 291, 298, 356	1840
42.	Waltz in A flat major, 279, 289, 291, 294	1840
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